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"YOU A MAN, AND STOOP TO STRIKE A WOMAN!" Page 10.

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THE McALLISTERS.

BY

MRS. E. J. RICHMOND.

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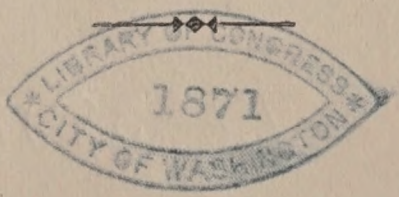

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THE MCALLISTERS.

CHAPTER I.

THE HOME OF THE DRUNKARD.

"I'M mad enough to fight. Wouldn't I just like to knock him, though!" The little red fists were doubled up defiantly, and the dirty, tear-stained face was purple with passion.

"Why, Jemmy," said Maggie sorrowfully, "it was only last Sunday mother learned us that verse, 'Honor thy father and thy mother,' and have you forgotten it so soon?"

"But he struck her, Maggie—struck our

good mother, and he mustn't do it ag'in, that's all! What d'yer s'pose Charley and Kate'll say to that? They won't preach any more about my bein' patient, I'll bet!"

"He didn't strike her, Jemmy?"

"But he did, though! And what for? Why, 'cos she went to prayer-meetin', last night, and prayed. Hain't she a right to pray if she wants to, I should like to know? Oh! but he mustn't strike my mother ag'in."

"No, Jemmy, I guess not, if we can help it; but he's awful to-night. Where'd he get his whiskey, I wonder?"

"He hain't had no whiskey. He's drunk on cider. He's been to work over to Square Brown's, and he allus gives his men cider. I'd like to tell him just what I think of him! There, now, hear him."

The fragment of a drunken song, interspersed with oaths and crashing earthenware, was heard, and then the door opened, and two little children crept out, and ran crying to sister Maggie, and hid their faces in the folds of her faded calico dress.

"Don't cry, Nelly. Come, Johnny, be a man. Jemmy, take care of these children, will you? I must go in to mother."

John McAllister was swaggering around the room in a drunken fashion, now and then kicking aside the fragments of broken dishes which he had dashed upon the floor. Mrs. McAllister sat crying in the corner, a purple ridge, where *he* had struck her, seaming her fair white forehead. The hurt on her heart was deeper still; for, amid all his brutality, this was the first time he had fallen so low as to *strike* her. She rose, and turned

her head as if trying to hide the ugly mark, when brave little Maggie came in.

Maggie was very pale, but a resolute light shone from her clear gray eyes as she confronted the drunken brute she blushed to call father. She was a pleasant-faced young girl, short and thick-set, with a profusion of short reddish-brown curls, and a ruddy complexion, which was pale enough now.

"What does this all mean?" she said, looking at the broken fragments lying about. "What has happened?"

"*I've* happened to smash a few dishes, and I'll break some more, ef *she* don't travel around and git me a cup o' tea when I tell her. Come, old 'ooman, step lively, or I'll sling some more o' yer best chany up the chimbly!"

"No you won't, father," said the girl,

planting herself resolutely in his way as he staggered toward the table.

"Who's a better right, I sh'd like ter know, gal? Guess I'll smash my own dishes, ef I'm a mind ter."

He slid into a chair as he said this, and looked up with bleared eyes into the bright, resolute young face before him.

"They are *not* your dishes, father. Mother bought them with her own hard earnings. You will not break another *one*. And what ails mother, can you tell me?"

"Wal, I struck her, I s'pose, the mean, snivellin' Methodist! She up and prayed, last night, in the prayer-meetin', when I'd told her a'gin and ag'in I wouldn't have none o' her pesky religion nowhere round. I've bin bilin' over all day about it. She'll never stop to argy with me when I preach,

'Wives, submit yerselves to yer husbands,' only she goes on and does jest as she's a mind ter, and she's got to *stop*." And he stamped his old boot down on the clean sanded floor, as if that was the end of the matter.

"Look here, father McAllister," said Maggie, pointing her finger steadily at him, and speaking slowly and distinctly, "you a *man*, and stoop to strike a *woman*, and that woman *my own blessed mother—for shame!*"

She was a picture standing there, every feature quivering with indignation, and her clear eyes flashing. And the half-sobered man must have thought so, for he gazed silently at her a moment, and then, calling back the old bravado, he yelled out, "Hoity-toity, gal! yer a purty one, now—mother's gal, ain't ye? Ain't yer ashamed o' yerself,

now, sarcing yer own father up in that way?"

"I am ashamed of my *father*," said Maggie; "but remember, now: don't you *never* strike mother again, *never*."

There are some natures to whom gentle, yielding obedience is only the signal or provocative of fresh abuse and insult, and they are not rare, especially among drunkards.

We are dealing with facts, not fancies. If we were drawing a picture from imagination, our young heroine, Maggie McAllister, might be portrayed as a model of gentleness, and docility, and reverence; but she is a living woman to-day, and we picture her as she is, and simply record the fact, that all through her girlish years, instead of enjoying the innocent pleasures of youth and

revelling in the light of a happy home, as most young girls may do, she felt always, down in her heart, the shame and stigma, "I am a drunkard's child." She alone could control her father in his drunken frenzy. She alone could protect her gentle mother and the little ones from his abuse, and all through the neighborhood she was known and honored as a brave, heroic girl.

She left her father, now sitting moodily in his chair, and went to her mother's side. She pulled away the handkerchief which she was holding over the wounded forehead, and kissed it tenderly. Then she bathed it in cold water for a little while, and, spreading a cloth carefully over it, she said, "Sit quite still, dear mother. I will do up the work, and take care of the children, and you must rest. You have worked very

hard all day, and you must mind me now."

Mrs. McAllister kissed the rosy face which was shining up into hers, and resigned herself to the loving care of her little daughter thankfully. Mr. McAllister had fallen asleep in his chair. The little children had crept in silently, and were huddling in a corner of the wide fireplace. Maggie moved around the room noiselessly. She picked up the broken dishes, and carried them out; then, placing the remainder in a pan, she washed and dried them, and ranged them, bright and shining, on the cupboard shelves, and set the table back against the wall, spreading a white cover over it, the mother watching her with a pleasant half-smile. Then she glanced around the room to see that all was tidy. The room

glowed in the ruddy firelight, for the eve ning shadows had fallen. It was the one large room of a log-house to which the whiskey demon had brought the McAllisters, but there were no signs of the abject poverty usually seen in the drunkard's home. The secret was solved by the loom standing in one corner of the large room, with the spinning-wheel snugly tucked in behind it. It was the mother's busy hands which kept the wolf from the door. The survey seemed to satisfy bright little Maggie; and, going up to the little ones, she said: "Come, children, it is time now for you to go to bed. I will go with you, and hear you say your prayers."

"I sha'n't say no prayers, to-night," said Jemmy sullenly.

"Why not, Jemmy?"

"'Cos I don't feel like it. Guess you wouldn't want to pray if you was as mad as I be!"

"Come here, Jemmy," said his mother gently.

He obeyed.

"What is the matter with my boy?"

"*He* struck you, mother." And the child grated his teeth as he looked round at the sleeping form of his father. He sat there, his face bloated and discolored, his head falling on one side, snoring heavily. Then he looked at his mother, with her gentle eyes and mouth, and high forehead, with the white cloth spread over it.

"See here, my darling, do you love your mother?"

A look of the honest brown eyes was a sufficient answer.

"Jemmy, in all my troubles I have had one dearly loved Friend, who has always stood by me and helped me. I love him so well that I look to him every day for all I want, and I would rather trust him than anybody in the world. I gave all my children to him years ago, when *he* was good and kind. You are not your own Jemmy; you are bought with a price. Will you turn your back against mother's best Friend, and my children's best Friend?"

"No, I don't want to do that; but I was so mad at *him*," pointing to the sleeping father.

"'Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us.' Pity him, Jemmy; do not be angry. It is not father, but the drink that makes him so.

Will you say your prayers, and forgive *him?*"

"I'll try, mother." And the little ones disappeared with sister Maggie up the narrow stairway.

"If God is such a true friend to mother, why does he let us be so poor? Aunt Arabella ain't half so good as mother, and she lives in a big house, and has everything she wants," asked Jemmy, as Maggie took up the little tallow candle to go downstairs.

"Why don't you ask her, Jemmy?"

"'Cos she feels so bad, and I don't want to worry her. And one thing more: she said I was bought with a price. How can that be, I wonder? Who would give anything for a little stub of a fellow like me? *I wouldn't.*"

Maggie set down the candle, laughing, in spite of herself, at the droll boy. Then she remembered the price that was paid, and was sobered instantly.

"Dear little Jemmy, it was Jesus that bought us all, and the price he paid was his own blood. Mother says we've no right to be wicked, for when we were little bits of children she gave us to God; so we are *his*. And the price he paid for us was the blood of Jesus. He gave his life that all little children might save theirs. His life for ours, you know; so we are bought with blood."

"We are bought with a price; we are bought with blood." These words kept chasing each other through Jemmy's mind till they were mingled together, and he was fast asleep.

CHAPTER II.

A LITTLE LIGHT IN A DARK PLACE.

THE young McAllisters were up betimes the following morning. They saw the first golden beams of the sun as they came shimmering down through the tree-tops, and kissed the morning-glories over the window, and bathed the humble log-house in sunshine as warm and rich as flooded the white house on the hill. Johnny and Nell made their own toilets, and washed their chubby faces and hands in the spring that was hollowed out beside the brook which danced merrily by, only a little way from the house. Then Nelly combed out her long, glossy curls and Johnny's short, crisp

ones, looking into the brook for a mirror, and the little ones were ready for breakfast, which Maggie was preparing. Mother was already at the loom, and Jemmy was milking the cow; so, while they were waiting for their bowls of milk, the children came and stood beside their mother, and watched her sending the shuttles backward and forward, forming the bright stripes of the gay rag-carpet she was weaving.

"How pretty it is!" said Nelly. "When I get big enough to work, I'm going to make pretty things, and let the dirty, homely things go.

"Come, breakfast is ready," called the cheery voice of sister Maggie. And the little family gathered around the frugal board.

The children took their bowls of mush

and milk contentedly, and Mrs. McAllister and Maggie broke open the nice baked potatoes, and spread them with the sweet, fresh butter, and this, with brown bread, constituted the entire meal.

"Why didn't you cook some meat, Mag?" asked the father, pushing his plate from him.

"We haven't had any meat in a week, father; but you've been away, and may be you didn't know it."

"When I get this piece out of the loom, I shall get some tea; I'm sorry we have none, this morning, John," said Mrs. McAllister, passing the bread to her moody husband.

He was entirely sober, this morning, though feeling the effects of his yesterday's excesses. He swallowed a few

mouthfuls in silence, and then, swinging his scythe over his shoulder, took his way across the field. A general sense of relief seemed to manifest itself as soon as he was gone.

"I'm going out to get you some nice berries, mother," said Jemmy. "There'll be plenty time afore school. I wish't I could get you some tea, or somethin' nice."

"Berries will be something nice, I am sure, Jemmy; and mother had rather see her boy pleasant and happy than to have a whole chest of tea."

"Come, little Nell," called Maggie. "Here's something for you to do. Make these dishes just as bright and pretty as you can, and then put them up nice in the cupboard; I will sweep and wash the

milk things, and then I must spin ever so much."

"O dear! that isn't pretty work at all," muttered Nell, pouting her red lips, and looking anything but happy.

"But it must be done, Nelly. We can't have any drones in *our* hive, you know, little one," called out the mother from the loom. "See how nice and quick you will be, now." And the child went about her task, thinking, though she did not dare say it:

"I wish there was no such thing as washing dishes or doing dirty work."

Meanwhile John McAllister was plodding over the fields, and his reflections were anything but pleasant. "I *am* a scamp, and that's a fact," he soliloquized. "I never'd a believed that my Fanny'd a

come to this when she promised to marry me. And I struck her; I'm a brute, anyway. In her father's house she had everything she wanted, and now she don't have nothin'. And she never twits me, but jist works and works. If they'll only keep the liquor away, I can help them at home a little; but the pesky stuff makes a fool of me. I wish I never'd see another drop."

That night John McAllister went home sober, and astonished his family by throwing a sack of flour and a quarter of veal upon the table.

"O father! how glad I am! Now we can have some berry-pie and some biscuits. See if I don't get you a nice breakfast, to-morrow morning!"

"I sha'n't be here, Mag. I'm goin' over to Barnes's as soon as I get up, and I'm

a-goin' to work there the rest of the season. They want Jem, too. They'll give him half a dollar a day, and they want him a couple o' weeks or so. Is't best to let him go, mother?"

"O mother! say yes, do; and I can get me some good shoes, and some clothes to wear to meetin'. Please say yes, mother."

The father's heart smote him at the eagerness the child manifested, and he secretly resolved that his children should no longer want for food or clothes.

But what are the resolves of a man bound by the slavish chains of that deadly habit, intemperance? It waits like a tiger, ready to spring upon him at every corner. Men licensed by law to sell him the deadly poison which is destroying him soul and body, which is making beggars of his wife

and little ones; professedly Christian men offering him wine, beer, and cider—*such innocent* beverages, but sure to waken the demon within him. What hope is there for him? He, too, has been a professing Christian. His name still stands on the record of the old church at ——, for his brethren fervently believe that, when one has once tasted of the joys of redeeming love, they will never finally fall away. So they bear with the poor wanderer, and wait for his return to his Father's house.

He can remember well when his babes were given, one after another, to God. He had covenanted with his true, faithful wife and with the Holy One, "to bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." He had broken *that* vow, as well as the

one he had made for himself; but *she* had not. Her life-work was before her. Oh! how often her weak woman's heart had fainted within her as she looked forward to the desolate, thorny path of life as it stretched away before her! Then she had put her hand in his who had said, "Thy Maker is thy husband; the Holy One of Israel is thy refuge," and the darkest places had been made light by his presence. To-night, the father was sober, and the children looked as if they hardly knew what to make of it. Little Nell even ventured to creep to his side, and take his hard, brown hand into her little, soft palms. He did not repel her. He even lifted her upon his knee, and passed his hand caressingly over the long, silken curls.

"What has Nelly been doing, to-day?' he asked kindly.

"Oh! been helping mother, and been to school, and ever so many things. I wish I had a prettier frock to wear, though, father. Should you like to wear such a faded, old, patched frock as this, father?"

"No, I don't believe I should. Is that the best you've got, Nelly?"

"Yes, father; 'ceptin' the one I wear to Sunday-school, and I mustn't spoil that. The children do make fun of me sometimes."

John McAllister looked down at the beautiful child upon his knee—*his* child, and thought, "She, too, suffers for my sin. Where will the curse end?"

"And if you had a nice dress, Nelly, and

a pretty hat, what then? Would you be satisfied?"

"*Some;* but I should like a pretty dress for mother, too, and a nice house like Aunt Arabella's, and a piano like Cousin Annette's. Oh! if I could learn to play and sing as she does, father!"

All these pleasant fancies, which seemed like visions of fairy-land to the little girl, *might have been real*, the father thought, but for the insatiable love of strong drink, which had swallowed up all. Honor, and religion, and property, and self-respect—all, all gone—for *what?* To satiate the fiery demon, which was ever crying, "Give, give," and yet was never satisfied. And this fair child, more beautiful than many of the pampered children of wealth, with her refined tastes, and her love for all fair and

beautiful things, how proud and happy he might have been as her father; but now she was only *a drunkard's child*, too young, happily, to fully realize all the misery embodied in that dreadful word.

Some such thoughts as these crept through the poor man's brain, not yet entirely degraded by his ruling passion, as he sat there. The child's fair head had drooped against his bosom, and she was fast asleep. Maggie and her mother were sewing busily by the light of the one tallow candle, while Jemmy, tired with his day's work, had crept away to bed with his little brother.

"All right but me," he thought, as he looked at the busy fingers flying in and out of the coarse cloth they were sewing. "I'm a good mind to say I'll never drink another drop of liquor as long as I live," he said at

last. "If it wasn't for that confounded stuff, I might a been well off, and little Nell here might a had her piany and fixings as well as her Cousin Annette. She's a nuff sight purtier child any day, ef she is mine." And he looked with a father's pride upon the beautiful child asleep in his arms.

"If you only will try, John, we shall all be so happy, and we will try hard to help you."

"I hain't had nothin' to complain on yit. If I'd a done my duty half so well as you, we never'd a been here."

Mrs. McAllister bustled away around the room to hide the tears that would come, as these unusual words of kindness fell from her husband's lips. She had long ago learned lessons of patient endurance. She could listen to cruel reproaches and

threats without apparent emotion, though none but the All-seeing Eye marked the heart-aches that she suffered. The human *heart* never becomes insensible to suffering, and many a smiling lip and placid brow hides an aching heart. Here was a new lesson—kind words where she only expected reproaches!

"Who knows but he may yet be saved?" And the tears fell thicker and faster, and she could not hide them now.

"Why, what's the matter, Fanny? What are ye cryin' for? I've tried to make you cry ever so many times when I couldn't, but I didn't this time."

"I guess it must be for joy, John. How happy we shall be if you will do only as you used to! I know it isn't you, John, for you were never unkind till you began to drink,

and we've gone down ever since. Now, if you will stop entirely beer, cider, and all that, the old, happy days will come back, or brighter ones."

"Oh! I can stop, Fanny, ef I only *say so*, but I won't sign no pledges. I can do well enough without that."

The week rolled by, and yet another, and the poor man kept his promise, and they were the happiest days the family had known for years. But he had not been placed in circumstances of temptation. He trusted in his own strength, and he believed he could do so safely, because it was not tried. Mr. Barnes, his employer, believed that his work-people had immortal souls as well as himself, and that the part of man which must live for ever needed the morning and evening refreshment of prayer and

praise as well as the body its morning and evening meal. So, whatever was the press of business, God was never forgotten, nor worldly business permitted to usurp the hour devoted to morning and evening worship.

Listening to the once familiar words of inspiration, something of the old train of thoughts and feelings came over the man's heart, deadened and embruted, as it had long been, by the stupor of drink. One night, Jemmy whispered softly to his mother that "father knelt at prayers"—this same man who, so short time ago, had *struck her* for praying. Every day, and many times in the day, she asked God to have mercy upon him; to restore him to himself, to his family, and to the church once more.

We read in the divine Word this promise,

"Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name shall be done for you by my Father which is in heaven," and this promise she plead unceasingly. How can it be, with this promise upon record, that those who have been the subjects of believing prayer for years, reject the last offers of mercy and destroy themselves at last? We can only understand it in this light—that God gives to every free moral agent the privilege of *choosing his own destiny*, and the dearest friend he has on earth cannot deprive him of that privilege. Witness our Lord's cry over Jerusalem: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem! how often would I have gathered you, even as a hen gathereth her brood under her wings, but ye would not." Oh! that fearful power of choice—with what awful responsibility it endows the soul,

which must *live for ever* in the home of its choice, under the loving watch-care of God and the holy angels, or under the dominion of the prince of darkness, where "the smoke of their torment ascendeth for ever and ever."

CHAPTER III.

THE WHITE HOUSE ON THE HILL.

"ANNETTE, Annette, why are you not about your practising? *Such* a lazy child I never saw. Your teacher is coming, to-morrow, and what excuse will you have, for your lesson is not half-ready?"

"O dear! I'm so tired, ma; and it's so warm, and I do hate practising."

"Your Cousin Nelly would be glad enough of your piano. If you hate practising so much, and make me so much trouble, I guess I had better give it to her."

"I wish you wouldn't be for ever bringing up the McAllisters, ma. It's bad

enough to have such cousins without being twitted about them."

"The McAllisters are just as good as you be, Miss Annette Golden," spoke up little John, whose indignation was roused by any slight put upon his favorite cousins. "You needn't feel so stuck up, for Nelly is a great deal handsomer and better than you any day, if she does wear a patched frock."

"Stop, John; don't you see you've got your sister to crying, now? *Such* children I never *did* see." And Mrs. Golden swept angrily down the room. In doing so, her dress caught under a jar in which a favorite white rose was growing. It was full of buds just bursting into bloom; but alas! for the beautiful plant, it was overturned by her sudden angry motion, and all the

tender young buds crushed beneath the dirt. Mrs. Golden did not see the other buds, more precious than those of her favorite rose, which she was crushing by her petulance and anger. She had enough to think of now, and John took himself out of the room in a hurry to avoid the impending storm, while Annette went to the piano and commenced practising the hated lesson. Mrs. Golden was a professedly Christian woman, and really believed herself one of the pillars of the church in which Mrs. McAllister was an humble member. When she drove to church in her handsome carriage, and stopped, as she did, now and then, at the log-house to offer a seat to her less favored sister, she regarded herself with profound complacency, and almost wondered that fortune should make so

little difference in her feelings toward the humble inmates of the log-house. Many a lecture did she volunteer for their benefit, and many a chapter on the training of children, for "your children will be pretty apt to take after their father," she said.

Fanny McAllister listened in silence. She had been so long accustomed to "suffer ' that the thought of resenting these well-meant intrusions never occurred to her. Still, when she looked around upon her little flock, and wondered *which one* of the loved circle would verify her sister's prediction—which one of those bright, happy faces should wear the mark of the beast and wring her heart with sorrow, a glad hope would spring up within her that at the last she should be enabled to say to

her divine Lord, her ever-present Friend, "Here am I, and the children thou hast given me." This should be her life-work, to *save her children* from their father's fate, to fit them for usefulness here, and for happiness hereafter; to this she would devote every energy of her being. And the devoted love and affection with which they all regarded her was reward enough for her life of self-denying labor and love.

"Kate and Charles are coming home, to-morrow. Oh! won't it be jolly?" said Jemmy, throwing up his cap in high glee. "I'm done at Barnes's, Maggie, and I've got money enough to get me a suit of clothes, boots and all! Now mother won't have to get any more clothes for me."

"How nice! but the best of all is, father

hain't drunk a bit in four weeks. Has he, Jemmy? How glad Kate and Charley will be!"

"No, Mag, nary a drop; and I don't feel a bit like strikin' him now, for he is jist the best kind of a father."

"O Jemmy! we can say that verse now, can't we—'Honor thy father and thy mother'?"

"Guess we can, sis; but about Kate and Charley. I mean to kill my biggest chicken, if you can get it ready, and we'll have one good time."

"Of course I can, and we'll trim up the old log-house, and make it look like a palace."

Jemmy laughed heartily.

All the pleasant little preparations which had made the children so happy

were completed, and the little feast was all ready to be served, when Charley and Kate drove up to the door, early on Saturday afternoon. Kate was first to spring out, and, rushing into the house, she threw her arms around her mother's neck, and gave her a hearty kiss. The children's turn came next, and then there were little presents for them all—a pretty pink dress for Nell, a pound of tea for mother, a hat for Maggie; "and Charles has nice caps for James and Johnny," she said. Charles's greeting was quite as affectionate, if not as demonstrative, as his sister's. He was a noble-looking lad, and Mrs. McAllister looked with a mother's fond pride upon her eldest born, with his clear, honest eyes and broad, high forehead. "He will make his mark in the world," she

said often to herself, as she observed his strict truth and high sense of honor, boy though he was. He had early chosen Christ for his portion, and, with his sister Kate, was a member of the same church as his mother.

"How much I have to be thankful for!" she thought, as she looked around the happy group gathered around the supper-table, on which Maggie had spread her little feast very invitingly. There was the nice fricasseed chicken, with baked potatoes, white and floury, a luscious berry shortcake, the sweetest of golden butter, and cream biscuits, the very pride of Maggie's heart. A broken pitcher filled with the brightest flowers occupied the centre of the table; and, better than all, the father, a sober man, and kind and lov-

ing as any father now, sat at the table with the ever-kind and gentle mother, and *all the children were at home.* In the darkest lives, there are crowning moments of joy and blessing, and this seemed one of them to the long-tried and careworn mother. She looked backward over the long, dark years through which she had struggled, wearily yet trustingly, and thought of the little ones, cold and hungry sometimes, and often cowering in fear from the fury of the drunken father. Now they were all here, and children for whom no mother need to blush.

There were much merry talk and laughter, and the flower-decked room of the log-house contained more happy hearts that night than many a lordly home. Charles's employer had advanced his wages, and he

was rapidly mastering his trade. In a year or two, he hoped to be able to go into business for himself.

"Slow and sure is the safest motto, Charles; you will not be in too great a hurry."

"Never fear, mother; but hadn't you better give a word of caution on that head to sister Kate? She is becoming a famous dairy-woman, and Henry Merton is in great need of a superintendent of his fine dairy."

All eyes turned upon Kate, who colored rosy-red to the very tips of her ears.

"You are a little too hard on Kate, I guess, my boy. I am glad to hear she pleases Mrs. Elton so well."

Kate's eyes said, "Thank you, mother dear," but her lips said nothing, and soon

the conversation changed to a pleasanter subject.

"Children who never leave home don't half-know what a pleasant spot it is," she said, by-and-by.

"Everybody hasn't got such a pleasant home as we have," answered Charles, who looked fondly up at his mother, looking so serenely happy among her children.

"What do you think about Cousin Annette's home, Charley?" queried little Nell, looking around the plain, uncarpeted room, and mentally contrasting it with her cousin's elegant home.

"I think, Miss Nelly, that I would not exchange homes with Annette, fine as hers may be; and as for mothers, I wouldn't swap our own dear mother for any in the world."

"Nor I!" "Nor I!" echoed the merry group.

What is the magic power which dwells in that word *home?* What potent art did this weak woman wield which could turn that most cheerless, desolate spot on earth, the home of the drunkard, into a loved sanctuary of rest and peace, where all holy and pure affections should take root, and grow, and bear fruit? "'Tis home where the heart is!" some one has truthfully written. It is not the outward beauty of the person which wins our love. The pearly complexion, and glossy curls, and sparkling eye may command our *admiration*, but not *love*. It is the quality of *soul* that wins *that*. And the home where wealth and art have lavished their treasures and given its

chief attraction is not to be compared with the humblest shelter where, in the atmosphere of pure, unselfish love and affection, the soul may find rest and peace. Love is a treasure which gold cannot buy, and the fairest home without it is a beautiful body without a soul.

CHAPTER IV.

DARK DAYS AGAIN.

"WHERE have you been, Jemmy, and what makes you look so glum?" asked Maggie, one day, as her little brother came slowly up to the house, his hands clasped behind him, and a dark, troubled look settling down like a cloud upon his usually frank, open face.

"I've been fishin' with Johnny Golden, and—and—I guess I won't tell the rest."

"Why not, Jemmy? You haven't been naughty, I hope?"

"I dunno; I didn't mean to, but I got Johnny awful mad. It was only the truth, though, that I told him; and he called me a

white-livered skunk, and said he didn't want none o' my preaching."

"And *you* didn't get mad yourself, Jem?"

"Guess I am, a little bit. Guess anybody would be."

"I am sorry, Jemmy; but tell me all about it, won't you? I hope you wasn't to blame."

"Well, you see, we sot there a-fishin', and havin' the tallest kind of a time, and John he begun to tell me about his brother Sam's comin' home tight, and I said it was awful, and he said 'twasn't, 'twas the best kind of fun. He said he had stole his mother's wine lots o' times, and sometimes he got pretty near tight himself; and I said I'd steal jest about as soon as I'd get drunk; and then he called me that name,

and I jist came off and left him. Mean little chap! I won't go fishin' with him no more, see if I do!"

Just then John Golden came sauntering up the path, with his fish-pole slung over his shoulder, and a string of fine speckled trout in his hand. "How d'e do, Cousin Maggie?" he called out, offering his left hand. "Will you give this string of fish to Aunt Fanny, with my compliments? And where is pretty Nell, to-day?"

"She has gone to visit Kate; but mother is in. Won't you come in?"

"No, I guess not. Jem and I have been having a bit of a tiff; I s'pose he's told you. Don't you think he's a goose to talk as he did?"

The Bible says, Johnny, 'Look not upon the wine when it is red. At the last, it

biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder.' I would let it alone, cousin. Look at poor father; see what he is, and where *we* are, and think what he might have been if it hadn't been for drink. You mustn't blame Jemmy that he hates it like poison."

"But, Maggie, you don't mean to compare me with Uncle John, I hope?"

"When father was a boy like you, he would have said just so, may be. He no more expected to be a drunkard than you do. But, John, he hasn't drunk a drop of liquor in five weeks. Who knows but he may be a sober man yet?"

"Where is he, to-day?"

"Gone down to the village to get some things. Mother sent a basket of eggs

along, for we don't have money to buy things with as your folks do, John."

"I hope he'll come back straight, Maggie, but the village is a bad place for him."

"I know it. O dear! but as long as he lives in the world he must find these bad places. People will sell liquor or give it away everywhere, and he's never safe. If he was dead and safe in heaven, I shouldn't feel half so bad."

"Why, Mag, that's awful."

"And I guess you'd be awful if you had lived such a life as I have, John. If it wasn't for mother, I'd a run away years ago. I've lived in shame and fear ever since I can remember—a drunkard's child, that's what I am, and it's *horrible;* and even now I can't hope this will last, for he

thinks he's so strong. He'll come home drunk, may be, this very night And, Johnny, the very worst of all is, *no drunkard can go to heaven.* Am I so very bad for wishing he was *safe there ?*"

"But, Maggie, if they repent, and stop dirnking, and do right, they can go to heaven as well as anybody."

"Yes, but they *won't,* that's where it is. If an angel stood beside them, begging them not to drink, it wouldn't make any difference. If Death held the cup in his very hand, they'd take it, and go with him right into the very flames."

"What ails you, Maggie? How you *do* talk, and you look as if you'd seen a ghost."

"I feel dreadfully to-night, John. It's time father was at home; he said he would be here two hours ago."

Late in the night, John McAllister reeled up to the door of his dwelling, and filled the night air with his drunken shouts and curses. Mrs. McAllister's heart sank within her as she listened to the old, familiar sounds. Neither she nor Maggie had closed their eyes in sleep, for the dread foreboding of evil hung so heavily upon them; and now, fearing to leave her mother to encounter his drunken fury alone, Maggie came down, and undid the fastening of the door.

"Keep me out do-ors, will ye, ye blasted old 'ooman? Lock your own husband out door, hey! I'll l'arn ye; ye'll jist go out door yerself, and every one o' yer brats!"

Maggie by this time had lit the candle, and stood confronting her drunken father.

"What's this fur? Why ain't ye in bed, Mag?"

"I'll go, father, by-and-by, after you have gone to bed, and I have locked the door."

"But I ain't agoin'; somebody'll take an airin', to-night, I reckon. Here, old woman, get up and see how ye like it."

Mrs. McAllister rose quickly, and threw a wrapper around her.

"Go up-stairs, mother," said Maggie hurriedly. "As soon as he is quiet, I will be with you." Then she turned to her father, and said, "Come, father, it is very late, and you are tired."

"And what if I be? Is't any o' your business? Yer allers cumin' atween me and the old woman for ever, an' I won't stan' it.

"It is high time you were in bed,

father," was all the answer she made, standing calm and resolute. Glaring at her sullenly from beneath his shaggy eyebrows, he threw himself on the bed in his dirty boots, with his old hat drawn over his eyes, and was soon in a drunken sleep. Maggie sat down for a moment, pressing both hands over her throbbing head. Her mother must not see her thus, every nerve quivering with excitement. She bathed her head in cool water, looking at the crystal drops, so clear and bright, as they fell from her fingers, and thinking, "They can never wash away the stains from *the drunkard's child.*" But when she joined her mother she was calm and quiet outwardly.

"He is sleeping now, mother," she said, "and you must rest."

Thus the old days came back darker

and more dreary than before the gleam of hope had lit up their darkness.

"It was my last hope, and it has gone," said the mother to her true-hearted daughter when they were alone.

"Mother, you have done your whole duty. Let this content you, and do not grieve too much. We will do the very best we can, and that is all we can do."

"Yes, and we will leave the rest with God. O Maggie! you have been such a comfort to me—my very right arm! I don't know what I could do without you."

"And I had rather hear you say that, mother, than to be as beautiful as sister Nelly."

"A beautiful soul is the very highest

kind of beauty, my daughter. I must give up your poor father, I fear; but if I can only save my children—every one of them—from his fate, my life will not be entirely lost. And I do thank God for my children. Thus far, they have only been a comfort and a blessing to me."

"You forget, mother, when you worked so hard night and day to get food and clothes for us."

"No, I do not. It kept me from despair. To work for those we love is only pleasure."

"Well, mother dear, you have plenty of pleasure, then; and if we are ever ungrateful enough to forget all you have done for us, we do not deserve a thought."

"We have many blessings yet to thank God for, Maggie. Here in the country there is plenty of work, and work means food, clothing, respectability. We are not despised because we are poor, but the very best people are our best friends. Then we have fruit and flowers, and sweet, fresh air, and sunshine. We ought to be very thankful for all the blessings of God, my child."

"I know it, mother, and I do try to be. I wouldn't mind the poverty, nor the hard work, but *he* is growing worse and worse. This isn't the will of God, surely; and then, there's the shame and the disgrace of it. You are just as much a lady as Aunt Arabella, and she has everything that heart can wish, and she looks down on you, mother. And Cousin Annette, if I

could have her privileges, wouldn't I improve them better than she does?"

"I think you would, my dear, because you do your duty so well in the place you are; but your Aunt Arabella is not as happy a woman to-day, Maggie, as I am. I wouldn't exchange my jewels for hers to-day."

Maggie looked up into her mother's face with questioning surprise.

Mrs. McAllister was a fair, pleasant-faced woman, with dark-brown hair combed smoothly back from a high, broad forehead, but neither her small, well-shaped ears nor her toil-stained hands bore any traces of ornament. Not even a brooch fastened the plain linen collar she always wore.

"You always look nice, mother, and are

pretty enough without jewels, I am sure, but I don't quite understand what you mean."

"Let me tell you a story, then, and perhaps you can guess where I keep my jewels. We read in ancient history that the Roman ladies were very proud of their collections of beautiful jewels, and that they used to exhibit them to each other on their visits with the greatest pleasure. There was one noble lady, named Cornelia, who, from her rank and standing, was supposed to possess a rare collection. One of her lady visitors one day asked to be permitted to see her jewels. She brought her children to the lady, and said proudly, "These are my jewels," and these words of the noble lady will never be forgotten while the world stands, because they are so true."

"It is a pretty story, mother, and I wish it might apply to your children, but it seems to me you are contented with very plain jewels. Nelly, now, who is so beautiful—"

"Hush, child! she is no more beautiful to me than my Maggie—"

"Who is only a very ordinary lump of clay, mother And good brother Jemmy! The minister's wife said the other day that '*he* was a diamond in the rough.' You do the polishing, you know, so may be that's the secret!"

"I shouldn't do much trying to polish a lump of clay, my child; so you see I must have a *real diamond* to begin upon."

"Well, mother, it *is* nice to hear you talk so anyway, and to forget that I am

only a drunkard's child even for a moment."

"My darling, I will say to you as you said to me but a moment ago, You are not to blame. You have done your whole duty. Let that content you."

CHAPTER V.

SUFFER AND GROW STRONG.

"CAP'N GORDON, I heard somebody a-sayin' that you wanted to hire a boy."

"Well, John, I have been looking around some time trying to find a smart, likely boy to help me on my farm. My boys are young yet, and my suits keep me away from home most of the time."

"Any new lawsuits afoot now, Cap'n?"

"No; but the old ones hang on wonderfully; but I'll beat 'em, if it takes the last cent I've got on airth. Have a chow, McAllister?"

"Thankee, don't care ef I du. You allus have sech nice tebaccy, Cap'n Gordon,

and you are such a beater on a lawsuit. Ef I understood the law as you du, I shouldn't want no better fun than to be inter it all the time."

"Wal', I don't lack a great deal of it now, John; but about that boy?"

"Oh! I'd forgot. I was a-thinkin' may be you'd want my Jemmy, a stout, smart fellow as you often see, and big enough to airn his own livin'."

"You don't mean Charley?"

"La, no. He's been with Boss Anderson this three year an' over; goin' into partnership afore long, he tells me."

"But Jemmy must be a leetle shaver, not big enough to airn much, I reckon."

"He'll airn as much as any boy of his size you can scare up, if his name is Jem McAllister, Cap'n Gordon."

"Oh! sartin, sartin, John. The boy is well enough, no doubt. What do you say to five dollars a month and found?"

"Agreed; but it does seem as ef you might say seven."

"Couldn't think on't. Lawsuits cost enormous, and everything counts up. Well, we'll say it's a bargain; and now, what'll you take, John?"

The two men were seated tilted back in their chairs on the tavern stoop, their legs crossed on a level with their heads, and had been busily engaged, during the foregoing conversation, firing jets of tobacco-juice at the dirty pillars of the porch. Now they came down and presented themselves at the bar, where Captain Gordon called for brandy and sugar, which they sipped with infinite satisfaction.

"That's capital brandy," said McAllister, eyeing the vile compound longingly, as he set down his empty glass, and smacked his lips appreciatively.

"Have another glass?"

"Thankee, don't keer if I du. That mis'able Barnes and his crew would stop this ere ef they only *could*. Jest think of it: stop a man selling this happifying stuff that makes a poor man feel rich. I'd ruther he'd take the bread out o' my mouth."

"Precious little you'd have to take out if it warn't for that wife o' yourn, McAllister," muttered a neighbor who was lounging by.

"What's that?" growled McAllister.

"I was only saying that you made a little mistake, John. The stuff makes many

a rich man poor, whether he feels it or not."

"What do you drink it for, then?"

"Sure enough! *You* tell. I wish there wasn't another drop in the world. It has ruined me, and my family too."

"Come, come, neighbor," said the Captain, turning round and reaching out a glass of the ruby-colored liquor. "You are a leetle blue, ain't you? Take a drop of the 'oh! be joyful,' and you'll feel better."

The man looked irresolutely at the tempting glass for a moment. A pale, tearful face seemed to come between him and its baleful light, but the demon within was clamoring with burning thirst, and he reached out his trembling hand and took the fiery draught, and swallowed it in an instant.

"Hi ti tol, ti fi rol lol—liberty's sweet, and so is licker. No petticoat government for me," shouted McAllister, who was now far gone in intoxication.

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed the redoubtable Captain, who wanted to save money from the wages of his workpeople to pay the expenses of his lawsuits.

The brandy had opened his heart and his purse-strings too, and money flowed freely.

"That Barnes is a confounded puppy. I'm a temperance man myself; but these meserable prohibitionists, wouldn't I jest like to get 'em in a squad together and fire into 'em? I'd make quick work with 'em, I tell ye."

The worthy landlord nodded approvingly at this generous outburst of the Captain

while he poured out his poisonous liquors, and cast his eyes toward the door in search of new victims.

But we will leave these worthy representatives of the law-making power, and turn for a few moments to look upon those whom the law is supposed to protect.

The floor of the little log-house is white as hands can make it, and the sunlight, stealing through the vines, falls in changeful pictures upon it. But nobody notices the vines, or the sunlight, or the pretty pictures they are making upon the floor. There is homely work to do. Patter, patter go the busy little feet back and forth, back and forth, while the busy whirr of the great wheel gives forth monotonous yet pleasant music; and the bang-bang of

the loom in the corner tells the secret of the daily bread.

What ails busy little Maggie? For, as she goes back and forth twisting the soft, fleecy rolls into fine, soft yarn, she is frowning unmistakably, and faster and faster buzzes the wheel, as if it were a relief to her angry feelings.

By-and-by, she stops short with: "I should just like to make one law myself."

"And what would it be, Maggie?"

"I would make a law that the men who make drunkards should be *hung* just like any other murderers."

"It is a dreadful crime, my child; but the law, instead of punishing the crime, *licenses* it."

"Yes, mother; and that is what makes

me so mad. Here we are working every minute of every day to get food enough to keep body and soul together, and every dollar that father earns goes for whiskey and tobacco. And the men who make the laws license men to rob him because he is foolish and weak."

"But we can do nothing, Maggie."

"Yes, we can, we do, SUFFER."

"If we can only 'suffer and grow strong,' as I read the other day! And, mother, I've been thinking. How can any one be fit to make laws to govern others when they can't govern themselves? I don't know a man who thinks it is right to use tobacco. They say it is a foolish habit, yet they use it, and they can't help themselves. Then they say drunkenness is wrong, and they *will* drink whiskey. If 'weak and

silly women' were weak and silly enough to drink a hundredth part of the whiskey or use tobacco as they do, what then?"

"Why, Maggie dear, you are getting excited. You forget how many good, noble men there are who do try to put down all these terrible evils—who would protect us if they could."

"No, mother, I do not forget; but I am talking about the men that make the laws which license robbery and murder—for drunkards' wives and children are robbed and murdered every day by law."

"They will dub you a 'woman's-rights' advocate if you go on in this way, child."

"Well, mother, right is *right*, whether it is a man's right or a woman's, and they cannot call me anything worse than I am—*a drunkard's child.*"

"O Maggie! there are things a thousand times worse than that, though I pray God you may never know them."

"O mother! what *can* be worse? I know I have a *right* to a happy home, or as happy a home as I can make myself, and I have as much right to life, liberty, and happiness as if I were a man; but my life is in danger. I am a slave. And happiness!—talk about happiness in a drunkard's home! And the men who make the bad laws are *responsible!* They say they make the laws for our protection. Protection with a vengeance it is! They sell us body and soul for thirty pieces of silver. It only costs thirty dollars, mother, to get license to poison all the fathers in the community; and then, woe to the wives and children!"

Wheel and loom were still while Maggie, her clear gray eyes flashing with excitement, and the hot blood crimsoning cheek and brow, poured forth these vehement words. Mrs. McAllister, gentle and long-suffering though she was, felt in her very soul that they were true; but she had so long been accustomed to suffer without question or complaint, that she listened now in silence, while the tears dropped one by one on the web before her.

"Now, mother, I've made you cry, as if you didn't have trouble enough before. How I could hate myself!"

"*You* haven't made me cry, child, but all these things are too terribly true. If we alone were sufferers, it would not seem quite so hard, but there are thousands like us, thousands like your poor father."

"And the wrong is so great, mother, that it will not be suffered much longer. People must wake up by-and-by, and help will come; I know it will. *How* it will come, I don't know; neither do I care, so that *it comes.* May be they will allow you and I to vote, mother, whether men shall be licensed to rob us. If that time ever does come, I don't believe we shall enjoy just the kind of protection we do now. The man who degrades and robs his victim at the same time will not stand higher than the simple robber."

"I don't believe that time will ever come, Maggie; and so long as so large a proportion of voters love whiskey, I cannot see how the laws are going to be any better. We can still pray, and that is about all a poor woman can do."

"Faith without works is dead, being alone, the Bible says, mother. Now, I haven't as much faith as I wish I had, but the little I have shall go hand in hand with works. I will pray *against* the rumseller, and hit him whenever I can."

"What, Maggie! you don't mean to turn pugilist?"

"Yes, I do, with only *truth* for a weapon. Then I will pray *for* the poor drunkard, and lift him up whenever I can. So you see I've got something to do."

"You will get enemies, my child."

"Only enemies of the truth, mother dear, and who cares for their approval? The truth is, I can't be like a piece of putty, or a bit of jelly, if I try. I've

had plenty of hard knocks ever since I can remember, and I've got to give some hard knocks in return. I've adopted my motto, 'Be sure you're right, and then go ahead,' and I'm *going*, you know."

"Well, may God bless you and guide you, my dear child. You have saved me from abuse and violence many and many a time, and I hope that some time you will have a home of your own where such things are unknown."

"When I do have a home of my own, it will always be *yours*, mother."

"You are very kind, but I shall stay with your poor father till the last. God has been my refuge thus far, and he will never forsake me."

CHAPTER VI.

THE POWER OF FAITH.

WHEN John McAllister awoke the morning following his debauch, he had but an indistinct recollection of the events of the preceding night. Of the transaction in regard to Jemmy he remembered very well, but after that, and how he got home, was all like a confused dream in his mind. Maggie could have told him of his return at midnight, of oaths and curses and blows, on his part; of courage and entreaties and a resolute will, on her own; and of the raving madman conquered at last, and sleeping the heavy

sleep of the drunkard—but she forbore. Such scenes were too common now, and were a part of the heavy cross the young girl was forced to endure month after month, and year after year. The heavy rings around her eyes sometimes told of the inward struggle, but outwardly she was calm and cheerful, and sometimes even gay. Mr. McAllister sat watching the busy figure as it flitted in and out and around the room, making all bright and tidy, and then turned to his wife, who was throwing the many-colored shuttles back and forth, with, "I've hired Jem out, old 'ooman."

He always gave her this title now. "Fanny" seemed quite lost among the memories of the past.

Mrs. McAllister paused with the shut-

tle in her hand, and looked up enquiringly.

"Don't set there staring like an owl. I've hired Jem out, I tell ye, and a good place he's got too. Cap'n Gordon 'll take some of his old-womanish kinks out of him, I'll bet. He'll larn to drink and swar like a trooper agin he's been there three months, I'll be bound."

Mrs. McAllister did not reply. She knew by sad experience how utterly useless it would be. So she resumed her work, sadly thinking, "How can I pray that prayer for my darling boy, 'Lead him not into temptation,' when we thrust him there? I can pray, 'Deliver him from evil,' and in God alone I put my trust."

She had a long talk with the boy that evening, and told him of the dangers

which would beset him—of the new temptations he would meet. He readily gave the promise that he would never taste a drop of the poison which had ruined his father, and well-nigh crushed his mother's heart, and that no profane word should ever pass his lips.

"You have never given me reason to doubt you, my dear boy," she said; "I can trust you, and that will make my heart light when I think of you."

"Yes, mother, trust me. I am glad to go away, and earn something to buy a home with, and then you shall come and live with me, and *he* sha'n't abuse you any more."

Mrs. McAllister smiled sadly. "I am very happy in my children," she said. "Already four homes have been offered

me as soon as they are *ready*," she playfully continued. "I will tell you, now that you are going away, Jemmy, your sister Kate will be married soon, and Charlie will marry pretty Mary Anderson within a year."

"Oh! won't that be jolly! And shall we have a wedding when Kate goes off?"

"No, dear boy," said the mother sadly. "Weddings and merry-makings are not for such as we, but we may be glad and happy still; for Mary is a lovely girl, and neither she nor her father looks down upon Charlie because —he is poor," she said hesitatingly. "Henry Merton, too, is a fine young man, and much attached to Kate."

"Oh! yes, mother, Henry is a capital fellow, and he is to be—lem me see,

my brother-in-law. Yes, that's it; and Mary is to be my sister-in-law." And the boy looked down involuntarily upon his hard, toil-stained hands and patched garments, as he thought of the fair, delicate girl, his future sister-in-law. "Will she come here? Won't she be ashamed of us?" he asked as he looked around the humble room.

"She loves Charles, and will love all belonging to him, doubtless. So we will not trouble ourselves about our poverty, for she will not, I'm sure."

Jemmy felt the confidence which his mother reposed in him. "She *may* trust me," he said to himself again and again; "and if I'm to have such grand relations, I mustn't be quite so rough. I'll do the best I can, anyway, so that

nobody need be ashamed of me, or disappointed in me."

When Captain Gordon came for his farm-boy, John McAllister was surprised at the cheerfulness with which the good-bys were said, and contented himself by saying, "The boy is glad to get away from hum, old 'ooman, thanks to yer preachin'. He'll hear a different kind o' sarmons, I reckon, now;" but the wife made no reply, and the flash of Maggie's eye warned him that enough had been said on that subject. Constantly under the influence of the vilest liquor, habitually doing violence to the voice of conscience, it was hushed at last, and all traces of manhood seemed to have faded for ever from the unhappy wretch. A cringing fear of Maggie seemed to be all that

restrained him now from acts of violence. Jemmy came close to his mother's side, and whispered, "You can trust me, mother," and the loving smile which answered him warmed his heart for many a dreary day.

The sound of wheels died away in the distance, and Mr. McAllister was sauntering listlessly by the roadside, as Maggie and her mother resumed their toil. The daily bread for all the family depended on the work of those hands now, and there were no idle moments.

"Mother," called Maggie, from amid the music of her whirring wheel, "it cannot be our duty to do what is impossible, can it, now?"

"What a question, Maggie! What *are* you thinking about?"

"About 'love, honor, and obey,' mother. Now, we cannot love what is wicked and repulsive; we cannot honor what is dishonorable; we cannot bring ourselves to obey one far beneath us—one so much the slave of sin that we ourselves become slaves if we obey—can we, mother?"

"You put the questions in a strong light, Maggie."

"The true light *is* a strong one, mother, but the way looks dark enough. It is 'till death do you part.' Think of it! Now, I will not be wicked enough to ask you, Can you keep that vow? because you have the patience and gentleness and meekness of a saint, and you can do anything that is right. But for poor me the case is very different. I am not

at all good, and if I should marry George, and he should prove to be like —like—so many others, I never, never could love him. I should hate him, I know I should, if he should come about me foolish and maudlin, and reeking with whiskey fumes."

"Can you think of such a thing in connection with George, my dear Maggie?"

"I ought not, may be. I like him pretty well, better than I do anybody else, but he is human; and so many have thought they were marrying good, noble men, and they have turned out drunkards. I never *could* live with a drunkard. That's out of the question entirely."

"And yet—"

"Yes, yes, mother dear; I know just what you would say, but if I *have* lived with

a drunkard all my life, he is my *father*, and I have borne it for my mother's sake. But it has hurt me; it has made me hard and unnatural. Talk of 'the ivy and the oak,' and of woman's gentle, clinging dependence on the strong manly arm! It is a pretty picture, but false, oh! so false. If it had been true to life, what would have become of you, mother, and of us all?"

"When earthly props fail, my child, we may turn to One that can never fail us. Many and many a time has that divine promise comforted me: 'Thy Maker is thy husband: the Lord of Hosts is his name.'"

"Your faith is your tower of strength, dear mother, because it is founded upon God. But for me the question is, 'Is it best to trust anybody?'"

"It must be dreadful *not* to trust anybody, child. You remember reading, the other day,

> 'Tis better to have loved and lost,
> Than never to have loved at all.'

I believe that sentiment; and, still further, that it is better to love our friends, and sometimes to find them unworthy, than to trust none."

"Then you would advise me to marry George?"

"I should not dare to advise you to take such a step, Maggie. Your own heart must tell you whether you can be to him a true wife in its holiest sense. If you cannot, do not marry him. It would be a dreadful mockery of a solemn vow. I would have no concealments. If he has

asked you to be his wife, tell him frankly just how you feel, and then you can judge him better than you can now."

"You are right, darling mother. If I have been so unfortunate in my father, I have at least been doubly blessed in my mother." And the impulsive girl ran and threw her arms around her mother's neck and kissed her, and then went back to the wheel, which sent out its monotonous whirr, whirr all the long summer afternoon.

Back and forth went the shuttles in the cloth. Mrs. McAllister was weaving, but the bright tints were in contrast with the sombre hue her thoughts were taking. Day by day she was weaving a life-history. Its warp was love to God, and its woof loving acts of service toward him and his creatures, patience and self-denial,

and all gentle acts of Christian kindness; but the dread shadow which had enveloped her married life darkened all now, and she sadly thought, "If I *could* teach my children to honor their father." Then the question arose, "Can you honor him? Is it love or stern *duty* that binds you to the shattered wreck?" She did love the noble man to whom she gave her heart and hand in unquestioning trust in her happy girlhood days. But what resemblance did he bear to this bloated, pimple-faced, bleareyed man, to whom oaths and curses and ribald talk were as common as the air he breathed? And it was not sickness nor misfortune which had brought him low. That would have been so different. He had given himself to the demon of intemperance, to be led captive by him at his

will. He had sown the wind; he was reaping the whirlwind.

She had become so accustomed to the effort to shield him even from the condemnation of her own thoughts that it did not occur to her now that he alone was responsible for the lack of love and reverence his children manifested. The bitter thought was, "How miserably I fail in teaching them what is due to him as their father!" She nursed the pity and compassion that glowed in her heart for him, and called it wifely love and duty; but the illusion gave her heart rest; and it is far better thus than to chafe against the bonds which endure "till death do you part."

Her reflections were again interrupted by Maggie, who stopped a moment from her busy tripping to and fro with, "Moth-

er, I may as well tell you now as ever. George is coming to-night, and I have promised to give him some kind of an answer. What that answer will be depends on himself. If I *should* decide to give up my *liberty*, what will you do without your Maggie? What will my father do? for I believe he cares a little for me. And when he is so bad, who will defend you from his violence? No, mother, I do not believe it would be right for me to leave you."

"You must not feel so, child. You have been a dear, good girl, I know, and *such* a comfort. But you would grieve me more than words can tell if you should sacrifice your happiness for me now. I should feel far happier thinking of you in your own happy home, and going to visit you now

and then, than to see you *always here*, and know that it was all for *our sakes*. Follow the dictates of your own heart, my dear child, in this matter, and you will make me happy."

There was no tremor in Maggie's voice during this conversation. Except for the deepening color of her cheek, she might have been talking upon the most ordinary subject, instead of the one most closely affecting her future destiny. But the school in which the young girl had been reared was a hard one, and not at all favorable to sentiment or refined feeling. Still, thanks to a mother's guiding hand, and the loving care of the Heavenly Father, Maggie McAllister had developed a character noble and generous and self-sacrificing to the last degree, if it did

lack the blushing timidity and maidenly reserve which are as dew to the fragrant flower.

"It is all settled, mother dear," she said, the following morning, as she was again alone with her mother. "I told him all my fears, and he did not blame me one bit. He said it was very natural I should feel as I do, suffering as I have done, but that he feared and hated liquor as much as I do. He said, 'Whiskey always conquers if we dally with it at all, so my motto is and shall be, "Touch not, taste not, handle not;"' and, mother, he said that if I will be his wife, my father and mother shall be his, and shall never want while he has a crust. So, now I am quite sure that I love him, and am glad and happy to be his wife."

CHAPTER VII.

DARE TO DO RIGHT.

"OH! dear, I do wish it was only as easy to do as to think," muttered Jemmy McAllister to himself as he took his way across Captain Gordon's broad fields to his work, one summer morning. "I did mean to be good and true when I told mother she could trust me, but it's enough to make a minister wicked to live here. They swear so that I can't help *think* swear, if I don't say it; and the Cap'n drinks so much cider that he's as cross as

a bear all the time. I wonder what mother'd say if she knew that he sent me to the store for whiskey. I told Mrs. Gordon she would feel bad, and she said she felt bad herself, but she dar'n't say a word. She would feel worse if she knew how often little Tom gets drunk, and Harry carries him into the house and says he's sick. You couldn't fool my mother so."

Intemperance had made its mark upon the proud Captain as ineffaceably as upon John McAllister, though he had not fallen quite so low. Mrs. Gordon, a meek, gentle woman, who had been a great beauty in her day, found herself entirely unable to cope with the strong will of her liege lord—so, when he forbade her to attend church, after a few fruitless struggles she

obeyed. He did not use violence, but taunted her with the basest motives. He used language to his pure, true-hearted wife which none but a cowardly and brutal nature would indulge, but he attained his object, and only in the silence of her closet did the poor woman dare to make known her requests unto God. She would gladly have confessed her Saviour before men, and enjoyed the communion and fellowship of his followers upon earth; but her spirit was broken, and she was destined to live on, wearing out her life like a subdued slave to her imperious lord.

The struggle told at length upon a delicate constitution, and consumption had already set his seal upon her. The beautiful eyes were lit up with fever or wan and lustreless, and the sunken cheeks were

every day lit up with a color so brilliant, that her husband rallied her upon growing young and beautiful again. He could not, or would not, see that death was slowly but surely doing its work.

And to the weary mother, the heavenly home and the eternal rest, where no tyrant will should control her, where "love was law," looked sweet and desirable except when the little children who called her mother drew the earth-cords around her. There was Frank, proud and wilful as her father, yet yielding obedience to her gentle mother because she loved her. There was often a clashing of the imperious wills even now.

What would Frank do when the mother who could draw her by cords of love was gone? and Grace, who inherited her

mother's beauty and gentleness, what would become of her? Tom, for whom she trembled, she scarce knew why; and Harry, and baby Will? How much they all needed a mother! "I will pray God to give them a good mother when I am gone," was the conclusion of the matter, and then the troubled heart found rest.

She was busied now calmly and quietly preparing garments for the little ones who would so soon be motherless, telling them when they were alone together of the happy home to which she was going, and of the loving Saviour in whom she trusted and who would care for them and bring them to her at the last, if only they would place their hands in his and be led by him.

So the home of the rich man with the shadow of intemperance upon it, and the

chill shadow of coming death, was far from being as happy as the log-house, which, but for the one black shadow, was always filled with sunshine.

"I will not deceive you, mother; I am not half so good as I expected to be; but it is so hard to do right there," said Jemmy on one of his visits home. "Captain Gordon don't work much unless he can find something to do Sunday, and then he puts in as if he was gaining ever so much, and oh! how he hates church people. If anybody speaks to him about his soul or getting religion, he says 'all they care for is his money, and they'll never catch him in a church.' Oh! he's ugly, I tell you. He don't get dead drunk like *him*, but he keeps drinking cider all the time."

"I'm afraid, my boy, that you ought

not to say these things about your employer."

"But they're true, mother."

"Maybe they are; still it would be better not to tell such unpleasant truths unless some one can be benefited by it."

"He'll never benefit anybody, mother, one way or another. He'll just do all the mischief he can till he dies, and that'll put a stop to it."

"O Jemmy!"

"You haven't lived with him, mother. If you had, you'd know him. Only the other day Frank told me that if she could go to church and Sabbath-school like other girls, she was sure she would be a better girl, but he will only let her go to balls and such places. I've been growing bad ever since I went there."

"'My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not.' The Bible, you see, has a rule for just such places."

"Yes, mother; but I have consented, and if I keep on going down I shall be just as bad as he is by-and-by. I am sorry, but it is so."

"And I too am sorry, very, very sorry; but you are not going to keep on in that downward road, Jemmy?"

"I hope not. If I could only have you with me to speak to me once in a while!"

"You may have a better, stronger Friend, my dear boy. Hear what he says: 'Call upon me in the day of trouble, and I will answer thee.' 'In the day thou seekest me with all thy heart, I will be found of thee.' 'They that seek me early shall find me.' 'If any man lack wisdom, let him ask of

God, who giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not.' 'Ask, and ye shall receive; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.' Is not that enough, Jemmy?"

"But I do not find much time to pray, mother, and hardly ever a place. The boys would laugh at me if I knelt down to say my prayers at night."

"Ah! my dear boy, there, then, is the secret of the going down. My dear, brave boy ashamed to do right? afraid to do his duty? ashamed of Jesus?"

"O mother! I did not think about it in that light. I trusted myself too much. I am ashamed of myself."

"And you will *dare to do right*, my boy, and be the true, brave boy I thought you?"

"I will try, mother."

"And Jesus will help you, Jemmy. When Peter found himself sinking, he cried 'Save, Lord, or I perish.' He did not wait to kneel down or to find a convenient place to pray. So you, wherever you may be, whatever you may be doing, lift your heart to God, and he will help you. He makes all the way so pleasant, no matter how many clouds are hanging over it. He is light, and there is no darkness where he is."

"If I was only a Christian, mother, I could take all these promises; but Captain Gordon says that 'the prayer of the wicked is an abomination to God.' He says the Bible reads so."

"He had better read again, for the Bible says no such thing. It says 'the sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination

to God,' and you can see what *that* is any day. They would dethrone him, and destroy his holy religion if they could."

"That is different, sure enough, and any one may pray if he is ever so wicked."

"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. When the thief upon the cross called to Jesus amid his dying agonies, he did not disregard his prayers; so now, that he is upon his heavenly throne, he will listen to the humblest prayers; and no matter how sinful and unworthy we have been, he will hear and save us."

"Then there is no excuse for me, mother. I cannot pack my sins upon any-

body else, and if I am wicked, I alone must bear it."

"Nothing can be truer than that, my boy!"

"Jemmy, if you and I were *real Christians*, I think it would be a great deal easier," said Maggie, who had been an interested listener. "We have been instructed, and taught to pray, and all that mother could do for us she has done. But now, that we are grown up, and can think for ourselves and act for ourselves, we have got something to do for ourselves. We have both of us got temper enough—quite too much, may be. If I could only have Jesus right in my heart all the time to help me to think, and act, and do, I wouldn't be afraid."

"O Maggie! what an idea! Jesus *live*

in this old log-house, or at Captain Gordon's!"

"This is better than 'the stable and the manger,' Jemmy; and isn't Mrs. Gordon a lover of Jesus? And when he says, 'Lo! I am with you always,' does he forget her?"

"Why no, of course he don't; and she is a blessed woman, if she does belong to Captain Gordon. He won't keep her long, though. But this dwelling in our hearts—in your heart and mine, Maggie!—and he so holy, and we so sinful. Why, I shouldn't dare to speak for fear I should speak wrong, if I knew that *he* was dwelling in my heart."

"Then, don't you want Jesus in your heart, Jemmy?"

"I—I don't know. I don't want to be

wicked, but I'm a great rough boy anyway, and I love to enjoy myself and have a good time. *Very* pious people are so long-faced and solemncholy, you know, and it always seemed to me that I should like just religion enough to keep me from being wicked, and not enough to keep me from enjoying myself, and let the rest be for the old people, and the sick people, and the women."

Maggie's face wore a mingled expression of vexation and amusement as she answered:

"In which of these classes do you place your mother, and good sister Kate, and our noble Charley? Mother is certainly as good as anybody can be, and she isn't long-faced and solemncholy, I'm sure. And Kate and Charley are

neither sick nor old; and, Jemmy, you must let me say that such a course as you spoke of looks cowardly. Choose the loving Saviour when everything else has failed us! I won't do so. He shall have the best of my life, and that is poor enough."

"You're rather hard on a fellow, ain't you, Mag? But all you say is true, and I'm a great blunderhead anyway. I didn't think of mother, and Charley, and Kate. They are jolly enough, but some pious people do look like vinegar, and you know it; and somehow, I've got the notion that it's too much religion that ails them."

"Jemmy, have you ever read in the Bible that 'God is love,' and 'Whosoever dwelleth in love, dwelleth in

God, and God in him'?" asked the mother.

"Yes, mother."

"'And that 'Whatsoever things are pure, and lovely, and of good report' we are to observe, and that the fruits of the Spirit are love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, meekness, patience? Now, what is there in all this to make one glum and sorrowful? 'The joy of the Lord is your strength,' the Bible says, too. Joy and happiness give strength like the sunshine, and if anybody in the world is happy, and always happy, it is the Christian who loves God with all his heart."

"They don't all act as if they felt so, mother."

"No; because, perhaps, some of them

get the idea that they want just religion enough '*to keep from being very wicked*,' etc., and they get just enough to make them miserable. They may be said to *endure religion* instead of enjoying it. Now, my boy, do you admire a lean, half-starved dyspeptic more than a healthy, robust, active man?"

"Why no, mother."

"Or a Christian who is so afraid that he shall live too near the Saviour that he don't know where he is, more than an earnest, happy Bible Christian, about whom there is no question?"

"No, indeed! You hit me hard, mother, but it is all right."

"If there's anybody I do despise, it's your shillyshallying, milk-and-water Christians," said earnest Maggie. "They are

so afraid they shall say or do something to displease somebody, you never know where to find them, for they are nowhere in particular. Now, if anything is right, and we know it is, why not go in for it, and stick to it, and live as though we believed it?"

"That would be more sensible, truly."

"Well, mother, I mean to be a real live Christian some time."

"When, my boy?"

"Oh! I cannot say when the call comes for me. Maybe the next protracted meeting."

"How long are you going to live, Jemmy?"

"What a question, mother! I certainly cannot tell."

"You certainly cannot, and you may

die before the next protracted meeting. Christ says, 'To-day, if ye will hear my voice, harden not your hearts,' and 'Now is the accepted time,' and 'Now is the day of salvation.'"

"Whoever heard of any one starting all alone to be a Christian, mother—turning square round, with everybody looking and wondering?"

"It is noble, my boy, to dare to do right, because it *is* right, not because somebody else does. You know you are in a wrong course. Turn square about, and Christ will help you, and it is far better to please him, to have him for a friend, than all the world beside."

"And, Jemmy, I will be with you," said Maggie. "Together we will choose Christ for our guide, and he will never

leave us, nor forsake us, nor suffer us to go astray, so long as we put our trust in him."

"Many of the best Christians have commenced in just this way," said the mother. "Instead of being moved by the entreaties of others, or by the fact that many were seeking the Saviour, they have acted upon their own convictions; and the Saviour is ever true to his promises."

CHAPTER VIII.

MAKING HOME HAPPY.

"WELL, Fanny, you are really quite a stranger; but I'm very glad to see you, nevertheless. How did you manage to get away from the loom for an afternoon?"

"Finished my work, of course, Arabella; and, having a leisure hour, decided to come and spend it with you."

"Very sensible of you. But come, take a seat in the bay-window, for my roses are all in full bloom, and my fuchsias and geraniums—did you ever see finer? Here is a low rocker, without arms to hinder your knitting; for I see the ever-

lasting needles sticking out of your pocket, and suppose you will be at it, as usual, the moment you get your bonnet off."

"No, I must take a good look at all your flowers first. How beautiful they are! You must be very happy, sister."

"I happy, Fanny? You don't know what you are talking about, I guess. What have I to make me happy?"

"Do you expect me to answer, Arabella? Well, you have a beautiful home and plenty of money; a kind husband and children, and good health; and last, though not least, all these beautiful flowers to smile upon you every hour in the day."

"Let me look over the list, sister. First, you say I have a beautiful home. True; but I am a slave to it. I can't

get a girl to help me but she frets the life out of me, because she is so lazy or impudent; and I have to work like a slave to take care of my family and dairy, or depend on such miserable help. What good does money do me if it will not buy me what I want, and that is good help and rest? Then there are my children. I never did see such children. They'll kill me yet, I believe. Only to think of the money we have spent on Annette to try and make a lady of her, and now she's bound and determined she'll marry Archie Crawford, who is as poor as poverty. She will run away with him, if we won't consent. Oh! it is dreadful!"

"There is nothing against Archie but his poverty, is there, Arabella?"

"Why, no; but that's enough, I'm sure."

"I do not consider poverty so great a crime as many do, sister; and if Annette were my daughter, I should much rather she would marry Archie than Captain Gordon's son, or many another I could mention."

"But the family—*think of it!*"

"She will only marry *one* of the family. I am sorry she will disappoint you, but it *might* be worse."

"I don't see well how. Then there's my husband. He hasn't the spirit of a mouse, and just leaves everything for me to manage; and I declare, sometimes I'm worn out entirely."

"He must have great confidence in you, sister."

"I wish he'd have confidence enough

in himself to keep Sam from getting drunk every time he goes to the village."

"O Arabella! you cannot surely mean it! Your dear boy doesn't drink?"

"Yes, I do mean it. He not only drinks, but has come home *drunk* time after time. It is terribly disgraceful; but if I say a word to him, he only abuses me, and says the bar-room is a great deal pleasanter than his home. I don't mean to be cross, Fanny, but I cannot help scolding when everything goes on so."

"O sister! it is horrible! All the rest is but trifling compared to this. It would be so much easier to lay a child in the grave if he died innocent and happy, than to have him live to grow up a drunkard."

"If it had been your Jemmy, now, Fanny, it wouldn't have seemed so strange; for I was always afraid your boys would get to be drunkards, seeing what they do every day."

"I don't think you could get one of my boys to touch a glass of liquor—not even beer or cider—any more than poison, Arabella."

"Oh! but that would be fanaticism, Fanny. My family have always drunk such harmless beverages as wine, beer, and cider; for I believe if you indulge them in such things at home, they will not be so apt to drink stronger beverages abroad."

"I cannot see it in that light. I remember that was the way poor John commenced the downward road; and oh!

it is a fearful one to him and to us all!"

"Dear me, Fanny, there comes Aunt Parthenia with her big work-bag. I did hope we could have the afternoon all to ourselves."

A venerable-looking spinster, with a long, sharp nose, and small, twinkling, black eyes, bearing on her arm a huge silk reticule ornamented with fantastic needlework, was seen coming up the walk. People said Miss Parthenia's nose was made on purpose to *pry* with, and the way she did worm herself into everybody's business was astonishing. What she did not know was, to say the least, of small account. She kept a record of all the ages in the neighborhood except her own, which, somehow, never rose

above thirty, while the wrinkles and gray hairs hinted at fifty. Her chief value was as a depository of family secrets; not a depository either, for she always picked them up in unaccountable ways, and, acquiring them in this way, felt herself at liberty to scatter them to her heart's content. People called her a gossip, but still they would gossip with her and listen to her stories, and so she was encouraged to go on like an itinerant newsdealer. Looking from one side of the walk to the other, and sauntering slowly along, she was near the door now. Many and many a precious morsel of gossip had she acquired in this way by means of open doors and windows and loud, careless voices. But all was still, and her light

rap upon the door was answered by Mrs. Golden herself with:

"Miss Pixley, indeed. Very happy to see you. It is a long time since you have favored us with a visit."

"Wal, how de du? And, du tell, if here ain't Mis McAllister! I'm in luck, it seems, for I didn't know as you ever went away from hum."

"How is your health, Miss Pixley?" asked Mrs. McAllister.

"Oh! misabul. I'm e'en a'most shattered to pieces, I'm *so narvous*. I've jest come from the village, you see, and *sech* a sight as I've seen is enough to skeer anybody to death."

"Why, what *is* the matter, Miss Pixley?" asked Mrs. Golden. "Is anybody hurt, or killed, or anything?"

"I should think there wus," said Parthenia, settling herself back in her chair so as to fully *enjoy* the story she had to communicate. "You remember old Newton. He was a desput drinker—wus than your man, Mis McAllister. He was on a spree yesterday, and arter he'd drunk all he could stand up under, he got his jug filled, and went in and lay down on the scaffold in the barn. He didn't exactly know what he was about, I guess, for he lay right square down over an open trap-door, and he fell through, of course, and just smashed his face. It looked awful, I tell you; but that wasn't the wust. He consated there was snakes, and devils, and all sorts of varmints squirming around him, and he jest yelled, and screamed, and begged

them to take them off; and nobody could pacify him. His hair stood straight out, and great drops of sweat wus all over his face; and oh! how he did yell and tear around! It was the awfulest sight I ever did see; and they kept pouring the whiskey down till he died. He had the delirium tremers, I believe they call it, and he's jest dead." And Miss Parthenia took out her huge snuff-box, and, tapping the lid with her lean, skinny finger, she took a large pinch to "*steady her narves.*"

Mrs. McAllister had laid down her knitting, for she felt sick and faint.

"Would it end so with *him?*" she was asking herself.

"It is awful," said Mrs. Golden; "too terrible to think of. What will

become of the poor man's wife and children?"

"They'll be enough sight better off without him, Mis Golden. He never airnt the vally of the salt he ate, besides the whiskey he drunk; and many's the time he stole things out of the house to pay for that. Now the poor old woman will have one mouth less to feed, and I presume to say she's glad he's gone. What do *you* think, Mis McAllister?"

"I think she will mourn for her husband a thousand times more than if he had died a good, respectable man; and I think, too, that the man who let him have the whiskey is his *murderer*."

"Wal, that's purty plain talk, I must say, to call as nice a man as Mr.

Scribner, and well off, too, sech a name. He paid for his license, and has a right to sell whiskey. He did turn pale, though, when Newton grabbed hold on him and told him that the devils had got him, and begged him to take them off."

"I don't wonder at it, Miss Pixley."

"If folks don't want the tremers, they must let the whiskey alone; that's all I've got to say. But I guess I'd better be agoin'."

"Don't be in a hurry, Miss Pixley," said Mrs. Golden; but Miss Parthenia had two or three calls she must make that afternoon. With such a piece of news to peddle, she could not remain long in a place, so, taking another huge pinch of snuff, she said, "Good afternoon, ladies," and went down the street to tell it to new listeners.

"She makes me think of an old crow," said Mrs. Golden, drawing a deep sigh of relief as the lean, gaunt figure disappeared down the street. "I am so glad she has gone."

"Some people carry sunshine with them wherever they go," said Mrs. McAllister, "while others are like an east wind. I suppose it is all true that she has told us, though, and how horrible it is!"

"Yes, indeed; and, Fanny, I have wondered, again and again, how you could be so calm and cheerful always with John as he is. I sometimes think you take more comfort than I do, after all."

"You think, 'Blessed be nothing!' perhaps; but, Arabella, if I did not try to make my home happy and pleasant, what would become of my children?"

"But how *can* you be happy, Fanny? If I had a drunken husband, it would fret me to death."

"You never can know anything about it, Arabella. We can never know until we are tried how much we can endure. I set myself to the task, when I found that all hope of happiness with *him* was gone, to try and save my children, and this has been the one purpose of my life. I have tried to make home the happiest place on earth for them, always looking for help where alone it can be found. I have been very happy in my work, though there have been sharp trials sometimes; and I believe I shall see what I have so much desired."

"I would give all the world for your disposition, Fanny. After all, it isn't so much what we have as what we are."

Trouble had brought the haughty spirit of Mrs. Golden down from the serene self-consciousness she once enjoyed, and the quiet yet powerful influence of her sister's loving spirit was felt even beyond the precincts of the old log-house.

"Home is the dearest spot on earth, humble though it may be," thought Mrs. McAllister, as she drew near it the evening after her visit. The rude walls were covered with vines, and gay flowers bloomed under the windows, a large tree spread its sheltering branches near the door, and the noisy, babbling brook beside it made pleasant music to those who were accustomed to its songs. John and Nelly were sitting beneath the tree, but rose quickly and ran to meet their mother as they saw her approaching, and Maggie, with her rosy dim-

pled face and short brown curls, sat knitting in the open door, as demurely as though the weight of years was resting on her young head. The last rays of the setting sun lighted up the pleasant home-picture, and there was but one thing wanting (so the mother thought) to complete its beauty.

CHAPTER IX.

SHADOW AND SUNSHINE.

MEANWHILE, the shadow grew deeper and deeper over the home of Captain Gordon. Jemmy noticed that the mother's cheek grew paler and her step weaker from day to day, but her eye was unnaturally bright and her cheeks rosy red every afternoon. It angered Captain Gordon when anything was said concerning his wife's failing health. Was she not *his* wife?—and his possessions were not to be lightly relinquished. She had always obeyed him because she must, and now he had bidden her to make haste and get well. So the subject was tabooed, and

the exactions of the little ones were as importunate as ever, and as long as she was able she yielded to them. "Poor lambs! they will soon be motherless," she said; "I will please them while I can." But there came an hour when an unbidden guest came to Captain Gordon's home. The children stood weeping round, for the loved mother lay white and gasping on the bed from which she was never more to rise. Captain Gordon stood near, all his pride and sternness melted now. One by one the dying mother kissed the children a last good-by, and now she threw her arms around her husband's neck and cried, "O husband, husband! give your heart to Jesus, and meet me in heaven!" As that last pleading cry went forth from the pale lips, an unseen but deathless spirit took its flight

to the paradise of God, and never more did the calls of mercy fall upon those deadened ears, calloused by the oft-repeated and oft-rejected offers of mercy. And does Jemmy forget the promise he made his own dear mother, as he sees the children of the rich Captain left poorer than himself, because motherless? Every night he has knelt by his bed and *prayed,* because he would not be a coward, because he had promised his mother that he would do so. And now he was not alone, Little Harry knelt with him, and he had taught him a little prayer, the first he learned from his mother's lips. Jemmy did not merely *say his* prayers now. He prayed. He asked a *real* Father for what he wanted, and received real answers, and the way was no longer dark and troubled. He had just as much

to endure as ever, but some One who was infinitely wiser, and kinder, and stronger than himself *helped* him. "If I never had had such a mother, who knows but I might have gone on hardening my heart till it was as hard as the poor old Captain's? It *was* getting pretty hard, and it ain't safe, I know it ain't."

Such were Jemmy's thoughts as he looked upon the iron-faced man looking his last upon the sweet-faced wife of his youth. The little children wept and wondered. A minister came to the house; they had never seen one there before, and he prayed to some One they could not see; and then the dear sleeping mother, who would never smile nor wake, though they kissed her and called her name so loud, was carried away and laid in a narrow deep grave, and hid-

den from their sight. It was all *so terrible* they could never forget it. And there are other things sad and terrible enough—homes in this Christian land where the Word of Life is never spoken till it is called in by the presence of death. There are little children, of whom the blessed Saviour said, "Suffer them to come unto me, for of such is the kingdom of heaven," who never heard the invitation, who know nothing of the beautiful land which the Saviour has gone to prepare for those who love him. Ah! fearful will be the retribution when those to whom these priceless gems are given prove faithless to the sacred trust. And the failure on the part of one parent is only the necessity for double care and vigilance on the part of the other. So thought Mrs. McAllister. "I must do *our* work

alone," she said; "and oh! how sad that, instead of looking to their father for a noble example, my children must be taught to shun it as they do the way of death."

There was great satisfaction in the thought that two of her boys had been brought safely through the shoals and quicksands which lie in the path of boyhood, and that her beloved daughters were intelligent, pure-minded, and self-respecting, as if they had known nothing of the trials and hardships of their peculiar lot. A new spirit seemed to actuate Maggie now. She was as firm as ever; as earnest in her abhorrence of the horrible traffic which had ruined her father and desolated her home; but a new gentleness possessed her; a happy light shone from the clear gray eyes which used to flash forth defiant glances sometimes.

She now from her heart could call God *Father*, and oh! the peace and rest which filled her heart at the thought of a Father so great, so strong, and so wise, and withal so tender and compassionate. She loved her brothers fondly; and what infinite condescension it was that she could call the Divine Saviour *her Elder Brother!* No one who has not known the sweetness of that sacred tie can realize how much is implied in that title, "Our Elder Brother." She seemed to have fewer vexations and trials than formerly.

Indeed, though the poor, lost father showed no signs of reformation, he grew no worse, and she had borne as much as she had to bear now *all alone.* How different now with the strong, loving arms about her! Time flew swiftly by, and the time

drew near when Charley should bring his fair young bride to his humble childhood's home.

"I don't know what we can do to make the old house look any better," said Maggie, as she glanced over the room. The floor was as white as hands could make it. A snowy cloth covered the table, and a pitcher filled with wild-flowers stood in the centre and filled the air with fragrance.

Over the small square looking-glass hung bunches of asparagus filled with scarlet berries, and wreaths of running vine were trained over the windows and around the picture-frames. "It looks pleasant to us because it is home, I suppose," she continued, "but how will it seem to Charley's wife?"

"Don't worry one bit about Charley's

wife, my dear," said Mrs. McAllister, smiling; "she knows all about us, and will think none the less of Charley's friends because they are poor."

When, a few days later, she folded the sweet young bride to her motherly heart, and felt her warm kisses upon her cheek, she knew she had not been mistaken in her estimate of the warm-hearted young girl. This was Charley's mother, to whom he owed so much—*all*, indeed. She had learned to love the saintly woman long before; for had not Charley told her all she had done and suffered for her children's sake? And the brave, true-hearted Maggie, and all the brothers and sisters of *Charley*—not much fear of criticism from her who had loved them all for *his* sake as well as their own. The old log-house came in for its share of friend-

ly regard—"for there is such a happy *home* feeling here," she said. The father was quiet and sober, and altogether the visit of Charley's wife was a rare pleasure, instead of the ordeal they had feared. And what of her—the fair young creature whose delicate beauty lit up the old house like a rare exotic? The children soon lost the shyness with which they regarded her, and began to indulge in a feeling of appropriation of their beautiful *sister;* yet Nellie said shyly to her married brother, "She looks too pretty to be really *ours*, and I keep thinking she'll fade away right before our eyes. She looks just like an angel, Charley."

Something in the child's artless talk struck painfully upon the young man's heart, and he turned to look upon his beau-

tiful bride, as he answered, "Do you *often* see the angels, Nellie, and do they always fade away right before your eyes?"

"Oh! no, Charley, but all beautiful things do, you know."

"No, not all, little sister. Look at our mother. Is she not beautiful? Yet she does not vanish away like a cloud, or an angel, as you would say." Still his brow clouded slightly as he noticed the pure transparency of his wife's complexion and the deep hectic glow upon her fair round cheek.

"It is nothing," he said to himself. "Why should a child's prattle disturb me so?" Then he turned to Kate and commenced rallying her upon her approaching marriage, as if wishing to drive away the unwelcome thoughts which intruded them-

selves. "I suppose we may come and see you, sis, when you get nicely settled upon the farm, or must we wait for a formal invitation from Mr. Merton?"

"Oh! fie, Charley, how can you be so thoughtless?" answered Kate, blushing deeply, and glancing in the direction of her younger brothers and sisters.

"*Do* be careful, Charley, how you speak before the little pitchers," said Nelly, laughing merrily. "To be sure, we don't know anything. Mr. Merton probably comes here on business, or to see father, and Mr. George, too. Oh! it's ever so nice to have pretty grown-up sisters, and I think Henry and Mr. George will make very nice brothers indeed."

"Maybe you won't think it's quite so nice when Kate and Maggie go away for

good," spoke up little Johnny. "Nobody here but you and I to help mother. Oh! but you'll have to do some things that ain't quite so pretty when Maggie is gone." Here was a new view of the case, and the little girl's face sobered instantly.

"It isn't worth while to borrow trouble, children," said Maggie. "We are all here yet, and your rabbits must need feeding by this time, don't they?"

"Yes, they are always hungry," said Nelly, as the children went hand-in-hand to the garden to pick leaves for the rabbits.

They were two speckled beauties which good brother Jemmy had brought them. The kind boy had built a hutch for them, and the children were never tired of feeding and petting them. The children were pretty sober now, for the thought of the

broken home had but just intruded itself, and was by no means pleasant.

"What do people want to get married for, anyhow?" said Nelly pettishly.

"I don't know, I'm sure," answered Johnny gravely.

"Most everybody does, though. Don't you mean to, when you get big enough? or do you mean to live here always?"

"What, in this log-house? Of course, I shall have a large, beautiful house, all my own, but I shouldn't want to marry for it, though."

"Well, sis, when I get to be a man, I will learn a trade, and get married, and build me a large, nice house, and you shall come and live with me if you want to. And I will have a nice room in it for mother and—and father, too, I

s'pose, for may be he'll stop drinking then."

"And may be he never will, John. He always did have spells ever since I can remember. If he only *would* let the whiskey alone, how nice it would be? I should be willing to live right here always; for he would love me and take care of me as Mary Barnes' father does. Why, Johnny, he kisses her, and holds her on his knee, and plays with her; and, oh! you ought to see the beautiful dresses and things he gives her; and she is so proud of him, and I—oh! Johnny, it is dreadful to be always *ashamed of your own father!*" And the poor child broke down into a fit of sobbing and crying which was pitiful to see.

"O sister! don't cry so; don't. I

know all about it, don't I? Don't the boys, every time they get mad at me, twit me about him? And I never can have a father to teach me as other boys do, and to give me knives and skates and things. But you know we've got a mother, Nelly! so we're not near so bad off as some children, after all. I wouldn't swap my mother off for any other mother in the world; would you, now?"

"Oh! no, indeed, I wouldn't," cried Nelly, trying to look cheerful again. "I'm a real little goose, I know, but I've been trying this ever so long to keep from crying, and I couldn't, at last, and may be it will do me good. First, I got to worrying about Mary. She is so beautiful and good; but she is going to die, I know."

"Why, *Nelly!*"

"Well, I believe she is; and then I tried to laugh at Nelly and Kate to keep the tears back, and I was glad enough to get away here. I always want to cry when I think about father; so that's all there is about it, and I sha'n't cry any more."

"There is Maggie at the door looking for us. Mother is worrying about us, we are gone so long. We are not the worst off of anybody yet, sister."

"No, indeed, of course we are not. Think of the poor Gordon children."

There seemed no shadow over the happy group which gathered around the tea-table in that humble cottage-home, and the fair young bride carried away

in her heart only pleasant memories of her first visit to Charley's home.

"The house is full of sunshine, if it is small and poor," she said to her husband, on her return to their home; "and they are all so kind and loving. I shall love them all, not for your sake only, but for their own."

CHAPTER X.

THE GORDON FAMILY.

SINCE the death of the wife and mother, all had gone wrong in the home of Captain Gordon. The little children sadly showed the want of a mother's care, and unfaithful servants carelessly squandered what the frugal wife had labored so long to save. Amid all the waste and confusion which the proud man could neither control nor prevent, he drank to try and forget his sorrows, but only succeeded in making himself more cross and disagreeable, and consequently more unhappy than ever. There was not much sunshine in Captain

Gordon's home. The children, alternately coaxed, and threatened, and abused, grew headstrong and wilful 'most as the father himself, and there was a sad clashing of wills sometimes, which reminded one of a pandemonium rather than of "home, sweet home."

But a brighter day was dawning for them.

"My children will have a good mother," Mrs. Gordon had said just before she passed away, and the angel-watchers which guard little children rejoiced when the spirit of evil which reigned in that unhappy home was rebuked by the presence of a loving Christian woman—the *new mother* of whom the dying woman had spoken.

It is a significant fact that, however a

man may despise and deride religion, and that single-hearted purity and devotion which are the crowning glory of a woman, he yet chooses *just such a one* for a wife, for the mother of his children. This is true almost without exception. And if amid such unfavorable surroundings the disciple of Jesus *walk closely in his footsteps*, hers is indeed a *holy mission*. She may fill heaven with joy; she may cause angels to rejoice over souls won by her efforts from the ways of sin and death, to the narrow way which leads to life eternal. Oh! if mothers *could* all rightly estimate their high and holy work—if into the young and tender minds which open to them as the flower to the sunlight, they would always drop lessons of truth and virtue,

how many young lives would bear fruit unto holiness!

Mrs. Gordon tried to do her duty faithfully and well, but the habits of the older children had become so firmly fixed that she could do little for them only by way of temporary restraint. Poor Tom was a confirmed tippler. The whiskey-bottle in the hay-field, the cider-barrel in the cellar, the everyday example before him, had their effect, and tears, expostulations, and prayers were as water spilt upon the ground. He had a fine mind, and a noble and generous disposition, and sometimes, as he grew to manhood, he would make spasmodic efforts at reform, but he invariably went back to the filthy habit again. He lived a

wretched life—a curse to himself and all around him—and died a hopeless death, a victim to false education.

Captain Gordon was often heard to wonder that Tom "*would* make such a fool of himself."

In that great day when inquisition shall be made for blood, *where shall the curse fall?*

As the years rolled by, Mrs. Gordon found that it was no idle task which she had undertaken. The proud, imperious will which Frank had inherited from her father grew stronger with her growth, and the mother was unable to control it.

Captain Gordon decided that the girl's will must be broken, and when her associations did not please him he command-

ed her to break them up harshly and peremptorily. Really he believed that he had her best interest at heart, but his way of manifesting it was so offensive that the hot, rebellious blood of the Gordons rose in defiant opposition to his commands. "I will be rid of this tyranny in some way," she muttered.

Frank had one suitor who was especially offensive to her father, and he forbade him the house, and ordered his daughter never to speak to him. She disobeyed, and met him clandestinely. Then, instead of trying the power of persuasion, he reprimanded her harshly, and locked her in her room, where she was kept prisoner, and a spy set upon her actions for several weeks. The girl was not a stranger to dissimulation,

and her will was fairly roused now. She professed to have quite forgotten her sudden fancy, but, as the months rolled by and suspicion was entirely allayed, she disappeared one morning, and the next news her indignant father heard was that "she had married the man of her choice, and was very happy."

Poor, infatuated girl! In trying to circumvent her father, she brought upon herself a life-long misery and regret. At the last, when she stood by her father's dying bed and asked him to forgive her disobedience and folly, she felt more peace of mind than in all those years of thoughtless pleasure. But we will gladly turn from these sad life histories to a brighter side of the picture. Gentle, thoughtful Grace, and Harry and Willie,

the younger brothers, more than repaid the mother's watchful care. It is very strange, yet nevertheless true, that after the painful experience with his elder children, Captain Gordon's hatred of religion was as violent as ever. He despised the only remedy for all his troubles; he hated the only Physician who could bring health and soundness to his almost broken spirit. And poor little Harry, who had learned to pray and love the Saviour, was forced to hear the name he loved blasphemed, and the religion of the cross scoffed at and derided even before he had become established in the ways of righteousness. But the child was earnestly desirous to *know the right way;* and such are safe, for unseen hands guide them, unseen arms lift them

up when they are like to stumble and fall. Those who trust in Jesus need not fear, for, "though they fall, yet shall they rise again." There are many weak, trembling, faltering footsteps *pointing heavenward* besides those whose early years have been filled up with lessons of truth and love, and who therefore walk less deviously. Grace Gordon grew up a comfort and a blessing to her family and to her own home. She married one whom she could love and *honor* with the full approval of her friends, but she did not learn of that "love above all others" until she had been a wife several years. The world failed to satisfy the deathless cravings of her soul. Although she acknowledged to herself that she had all she needed of its good things, though she was an

honored wife and happy mother, she was still restless and unsatisfied. When she came to know Christ, the world's Redeemer, as *her Saviour*, her heart was filled with such love to him and to the world for which he died that she said, "Why *don't* everybody love the Saviour? How can they help seeing how blessed it is to have such a friend? I must see my poor father. I know I can make him believe it." But she returned chilled and wounded and discouraged, saying only, "*My poor, poor father.* It is a pitiful sight —a *doomed soul* living in the beautiful world which God has made, living in his air and sunshine, and partaking of his bounty every moment, and more unmindful of him than the beasts which perish. To every such soul there has come at

some time in their life history, *many* times, it may be, a still, small voice saying, "This is the way, walk ye in it;" a gentle, loving voice whispering, "Come unto me, and be saved;" but he has drowned the voice of the Heavenly Spirit in floods of worldliness, and turned away from him till *he comes no more.* The calls of mercy fall unheeded now. *They are not for him. A soul in ruin,* yet as comely and fair-proportioned, perhaps, to all save the All-seeing Eye, or even those temples of the Holy Ghost which shall shine for ever in the kingdom of our Father. "I know now what it was that kept my sainted mother happy and peaceful amid all her trials," said Grace; "but, if we could have been taught about this before, we would not have had to mourn for poor

Tom and Kate. If we are taught to *obey God*, it is *so much easier to obey our parents*."

"Yes, yes," answered her husband. "Children see further than we think they do, and they are a great deal more apt to do *as we do* than as we say. The best way is, according to my way of thinking, *to be* about what we want our children to be. It is a great deal better than preaching."

"I would be willing, yes, glad, to spend my whole life praying for poor father, if I could have the faith that he would some time turn to Christ; but my heart sinks like lead when I think of him."

"Why, Grace, I thought you had such boundless faith that God is both willing

and able to give you all you need! Can he not give you your father?"

"I do believe that he 'will supply all our need' so far as he can."

"Can! Why, Grace, I am surprised at you. *Cannot* God *do all things?*"

"No, my dear; I think not. He cannot lie. He cannot deny himself. He has given us power to choose. He will not violate our free will. How, then, can prayer be answered?"

"We know how it is answered. How often we hear the inner voice pleading in our hearts, but we know—we are conscious—that we have the power to refuse obedience. I believe in answer to prayer the Holy Spirit strives with our friends, and then comes the dreadful power to reject the Spirit and choose eternal death,

and how many avail themselves of the choice! All I can do is to put my trust in God and keep praying."

This has been the refuge of many a burdened heart. The sense of absolute dependence upon one who is *strong to deliver* and mighty to save is very sweet to those who have been trusting to broken reeds of worldly pleasure and advantage.

Earth has no rest so entire, no peace so deep and abiding, as the most suffering and storm-tossed Christian may find in Christ, the divine Redeemer.

CHAPTER XI.

A MOTHER'S INFLUENCE.

WHILE we have been following the fortunes of the Gordons, the swift-rolling years have wrought many changes with the McAllisters, and, as a faithful chronicler, we must retrace our steps. There is no change in the old log-house since first we looked upon it. It might have been yesterday, for all the difference we see in its outward appearance, yet years have passed away since then. We miss many bright, cheerful faces, too, for three happy homes have branched from the parent hive, and only Nelly, of all the

group of children, is left at home. The loom still holds its place of honor, and no one of all the children thinks of despising it, for it is associated in their childish memories with the dear form which still sits before it, though the stern necessity which once demanded it has passed away. A little bent, perhaps, that figure is now; and the face may be a shade paler and more careworn, but the calm, cheerful expression is there still. Christ dwelling in the heart is a thousand times more precious than the fabled "elixir of youth." The blessed assurance, "Lo, *I* am with you always," is better than troops of friends, or all the world can offer. Mr. McAllister sits dozing by the fireside in his usual seat. A glance at his stolid face will tell us

there has been no reform there, no waking up of the better nature so long stupefied by drink. And pretty Nelly, who loved all beautiful things, we must not pass her by. She is a fair young maiden, with large dark eyes, and long silken lashes, and the same glossy curls which were Maggie's pride so long ago. She has not conquered her early love for beauty, and now, after all the homely tasks are done, she is indulging her ruling passion. In her hands she is holding a pure white lily, which she is looking at very intently, and before her the sheets of snowy wax and petals, partly moulded, tell of her occupation. Yet there is a far-away look in her eyes, as if her heart is not entirely in her work, much as she loves it.

"I was thinking, mother," she said at last, "about Mary, and the time she was here first. How lovely she was, and how sad I felt every time I looked at her! I felt so sure she was not long for this world; and you remember that she only lived a little more than a year. How strange it was about her and Emma! How they loved each other! It seemed hard that Mary must die when everybody loved her so! And poor Charley, how his heart was bound up in her! But I never quite understood how he came to marry Emma."

"It was a singular story, quite a romance some would call it, Nelly; but we all love Emma very much, I am sure."

"Oh! yes, certainly we do, mother;

but, when one has loved once as Charley loved his wife, how *could* he marry again? That's the mystery of it to me."

"Why, Nelly, it was Mary's request. She joined their hands herself on her dying bed, and asked her friend to fill her place in her husband's home and heart when she had gone to her heavenly home."

"Oh! how strange, and how dreadful death must have seemed to her, so young and beautiful as she was. I don't see how even the thought of her home in heaven could have made her willing to leave all she loved and all who loved her here."

"It seems dark to us, but there are many things in this world that we cannot understand. Mary loved the Saviour,

and trusted him *absolutely*. This did not make her love her earthly friends less, but, when the Saviour called her to him, she was ready to obey. She must go a little before her loved ones, and she would be awaiting till they came. She did not wish them to mourn and weep for her, but to be happy, and to remember her as happy too. There was nothing gloomy or terrible when Mary went away, and it seems to me the most natural thing in the world that Charley should do just as he has done. Mary's name is spoken as fondly in her old home as if she were still there."

"Yes, mother, you are right, I am sure; and I am very foolish and romantic, of course; but perhaps selfish would be the better word."

"It is a great thing, my child, to be entirely free from selfishness."

"I don't know but one person in the world who is like that, mother, and that is your own dear self. You have lived for others always, till you don't seem to think of self at all."

"What an idea, child! Perhaps, now, it was selfishness, after all. Are we not happier in seeing the happiness and prosperity of those we love than in any other way?"

"You are, I presume, mother; but I don't call that selfishness. It isn't *my* kind, anyway."

"Well, Nelly dear, we will not trouble ourselves about names, only we will try always to be right. I have just heard from John, as you will be glad to know."

"What's that, old woman?" questioned Mr. McAllister, rousing from the dozing fit in which he spent so much of his time, now at the mention of his name.

"I was only speaking to Nelly," said his wife.

"But you was talking about me."

"No, father; mother was speaking of brother Johnny."

"And where is the brat? I'd e'enamost forgot we had sech a boy."

"Why, father, don't you remember? He has been nearly three years with Mr. Benson. He comes home often enough, I am sure, that you needn't forget him."

"And a noble, good boy he is, too," said the mother. "When he has finished learning his trade, Mr. Benson will take

him into business with him; and I feel entirely safe about him now."

Mr. McAllister had fallen asleep again, and Nelly answered:

"Johnny is a noble fellow, to be sure, mother. He used to tell such brave stories about earning money enough to build a nice house of his own, and that I should come and live with him; and you, dear mother—he always remembered you—you should have a pleasant room where you could rest and enjoy yourself, and never have to work any more."

"Dear boy, it's just like him; but father and I will stay together in the old home. The children do not mean that we shall want for anything, and it will be a great deal better, I know.

George and Maggie are determined we shall go with them, and Charley, and Kate, and Jemmy. Never mother was blessed with better or kinder children."

"And never children were blessed with a better mother," said Nelly playfully; "only she is just a little wilful, and likes to work more than they like to have her."

"I shouldn't be happy if I couldn't work, I'm afraid, I am so used to it; and I have plenty of time to read my Bible. I don't care to read a great deal besides."

"You have read that so many times, mother, I wonder sometimes if you never get tired of it."

"I should sooner think of getting tired of my daily bread, Nelly. There is no-

thing so new and fresh in the wide world as the Bible, if it was given us thousands of years ago."

"There is the great wonder and mystery of it, mother. I believe you love the Bible to-day just as well as the martyrs did hundreds of years ago—just as well as you did when you first learned to read it. Why, I should think it would get old-fashioned and tiresome, as everything else does when it grows old."

"Fathers and mothers, for example, Nelly."

"No, no; you *know* I did not mean that, darling mother."

"I don't believe you did, child; at any rate, I do not think I shall ever fret or grieve about being a burden to *my children*, if I am ever so old-fashioned;

but about the Bible. The sun doesn't grow old-fashioned, does it? and it only gives light to our eyes, while the Bible gives light to our souls. We don't tire of the moon and stars, nor of the beauties of creation; and I never yet knew one that loved the Bible to tire of it. On the contrary, the more we read it, the more we love it, the richer and fresher it seems; and this is one of the proofs that it is God's Word."

"Mother, do you know that your life is one of the greatest mysteries in the world to me? When you were a girl, you had everything to make you happy. Aunt Arabella told me all about it, and about"—here the girl glanced toward the sleeping form in the chimney-corner. The heavy snoring assured her that there

was no danger of having another listener —"she told me about *him*—how happy you were together at first, and how he began to go down, and, in spite of all your struggles, how he brought you down. Mother, when you found that you couldn't save him, why didn't you leave him? How could you bear the thought of a whole life bound to such a man *as his wife?*" An involuntary shudder went over Nelly as she said this, looking at the poor victim of licensed crime.

Mrs. McAllister left her seat before the loom, and, taking a low rocker beside her daughter, she sat for a few moments with folded hands, as if recalling those long, painful years. She could not look back upon them yet without strong

emotion. Nelly looked from one to the other. The coarse imbruted form, the wreck of a once noble manhood, said as plainly as words can say, "The wages of sin is death," and the pure, saintly features of the mother said as plainly, "But the gift of God is eternal life." She had borne about this life of God in her soul, linked as she was to that *body of death.* Through the storms and darkness, when heart and flesh seemed about to fail her, this eternal life-principle had buoyed her up and strengthened her for duty and for trial. Nothing of all this, however, entered Nelly's mind as she looked upon her parents, as widely different in form and features as in their lives. She wondered at her mother's choice, if she *could* love, if she ever *had* loved him, and

if this was a type of marriage. If it was, she shuddered at the thought of what might be in the future for her. The wax-flowers were scattered around the table before her, and the natural ones, from which she was copying, were unheeded, only as she was twisting them in pieces, careless of what she was doing.

"Nelly," spoke the mother at last, "I do not know but I have been wrong trying to keep back all that was repulsive and unpleasant in our lives. It might have been better if you had known all, as your sister Maggie always did. It might have been a warning to you; but I wanted you to respect your father as far as you possibly could, and we all wanted to make our darling pet happy."

"Yes, mother, I believe you all *do* try

to spoil me. I have never taken hold of the hard things as dear, good Maggie and Kate have done. I do so love beautiful things and pleasant work. I'm afraid I've been selfish, darling mother."

"No, my dear, I think not; but you are grown up now, and, by-and-by, we may lose you as we have the others from the home-nest. If I could make you realize what a fearfully important step young girls take when they give their lives into another's keeping, I would be willing to lay my own life and heart bare before you."

"It shall be a sacred trust, my mother."

"When I married your father, Nelly, I was a happy, thoughtless girl, as your Aunt Arabella told you, knowing nothing

of hardship or trial. Sometimes people give their hearts where the better judgment does not approve; and John *was* a little wild sometimes, but he said I could make him anything I wished, and I believed him. Everybody drank wine in those days, and temperance societies were not looked upon as favorably as they now are. All went well for several years, and, during that happy time, our children were given us. There was a revival in the town, and your father and I gave our hearts to God, and joined the church to which we still belong. Our children were also given to God, and we covenanted to bring them up 'in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.' In my darkest hours, I have remembered with gladness that you were all conse-

crated to Jesus, and my faith in his promises has never once wavered. When your father first began to go down, it was very slowly, and I never thought it would end here. First he neglected asking a blessing at the table, as he had always done, and then family prayer took up too much time. I tried for a while to read and pray myself with the children, but he grew so violent and abusive that I was forced to give it up. The secret was explained when, one night, he was brought home drunk. O my precious child! I pray God you may never know the agony I suffered that dreadful night. I did not close my eyes for one moment all that long, lonely night when I first began to realize that henceforth I was worse than widowed.

It was bad enough to endure his petulance and harshness, instead of the kind, loving words he once had for me; but, when I came to know the *cause*, it almost crushed me. Those were the darkest hours I ever knew. He grew worse rapidly, and my friends tried to get me to leave him; but, Nelly, I never could look upon the marriage vow as lightly as some do. When that vow is once spoken, it binds me *until death.* That is the only divorce I could ever recognize. Oh! how I tried to save that man."

A deep flush had crept into Mrs. McAllister's face as she went over those dark, fearful days, and her hands were clasped tightly as if in pain; and there was a pain, keen and sharp as a dart, as the

memories of the old struggles came over her.

"I prayed for him, and strove to save him, as if my own soul were hanging over the flames which I knew threatened him, *but all in vain.*"

Here the poor woman sank back in her chair, and covered her face with her hands. Nelly had never seen her mother so agitated, and she said:

"Don't go on, dear mother; it is so painful for you. I know it is dreadful, but father is waking again."

"I thought I was stronger, darling; but this evening, perhaps, I will tell you the rest."

With a long, deep yawn, Mr. McAllister roused himself, and, rising from his chair, he went to the shelf where he usually

kept his pipes and tobacco, and, filling one, was soon enveloped in a cloud of smoke. Smoking and sleeping were his great resources now. There was not always money for whiskey, for the comforts and necessaries of life did not include that, his children thought; and the mother kept the purse. Consequently he was not often intoxicated; but a life of dissipation had left its marks upon him which could never be erased.

There was company in the afternoon and evening, for Mrs. McAllister had many friends who enjoyed a visit at her humble home, as well as the children, who were never long absent.

It was the evening of the next day before they were again alone, and Nelly almost dreaded to hear her mother re-

sume the story of her life which had so agitated her; yet she dreaded to have her leave it in that saddest, darkest place. She felt somewhat reassured when her mother seated herself by the fireside, and took up her knitting, pleasantly saying:

"I will finish my story, to-night, Nelly."

She looked the picture of comfort, with the ruddy firelight dancing over her; and Nelly drew a low stool to her feet, and sat down upon it, resting one hand upon her knee.

It was a pretty picture they made, the fair young maiden in the dew of youth looking up into the calm, placid face where the light of God's love was shining.

"I am afraid I made you sad, yester-

day, Nelly dear, calling up those old, dark days."

"But *you passed through them*, mother. Why should I shrink from hearing about them?"

"They have gone into eternity, my child, and I hope never again to shadow your heart with them, for they were not all dark. The promise, 'Call upon me in the day of trouble, and I will answer thee,' was mine, but not in just the way I expected. Prayer was not in vain; but the blessings came upon my own heart, and upon my children, instead of their poor father for whom I prayed. My faith had been weak and wavering, and I was not always *sure* whether I loved God or not; but, when I lifted up my heart in agony to God for help, he

came to me with such fulness of blessing, he gave me such assurance of faith, that I felt that *he had set his seal upon me—that I was his for ever.* From that time I have trusted him as I have no earthly friend, and he has never failed me. I hope my dear Nelly will never need the bitter lessons that taught me where to find my best Friend. I love to see the young and happy give their hearts to Jesus. He is as precious a friend to them as to the sad and sorrowful."

"I believe I already love my mother's Friend," answered Nelly.

Mrs. McAllister clasped the small, fair hand which was laid confidingly upon her knee, and said:

"I want to present you, *every one*, to him, as I gave you in holy baptism. I

believe I shall say to him at that last great day, 'Here am I, and the children thou hast given me.' But I must hasten with my story. There was a time when I had strong hope for *him*, for temptation was removed. We enjoyed a prohibitory law, 'The Maine Law' it was called. We poor drunkards' wives hailed it as the drowning man clutches at the plank which is his only hope; and, Nelly, it is the only hope of poor drunkards and their families now; but they took it from us. They will answer for that wrong at the judgment-bar of God, where all our wrongs shall be redressed. It was very hard, after we had enjoyed a year of happiness, to see all the places where misery, and death, and despair were dealt out opened again, licensed

by law, and to know that our loved ones must go down under their baleful influence, 'where their worm dieth not, and their fire is not quenched.' I need not tell you the rest, for you remember too well. You will never, I am sure, my darling, tempt the fate which has been your mother's. Never trust a man who is even in the slightest degree given to dissipation. If he has not respect enough for his manhood to keep from drunkenness, he will not regard the feelings of his wife."

"You need have no fears for me, mother. I never could love a man who is weak enough to tamper with liquors in any form. It looks foolhardy, when he must see how many slaves there are. It is just like putting the chains about

his neck *just for fun;* and, mother, they *wear* them, too, when they least suspect it. *Other people* can see them, even while they are prating of liberty and freedom, with the chains of the drunkard crushing them down into slavery."

"It is dreadful, my child. Let us pray God that the time may soon come when the drunkard-maker shall stand before the law where he belongs, by the side of the robber and the murderer."

CHAPTER XII.

FAREWELL GLANCES.

SHALL we make a farewell call upon our friends the. Goldens? The house is unchanged, but a fair, resolute young woman, "Johnny's" wife, is the presiding genius now. John Golden is a tall, fine-looking man, with a kind, generous heart; but the fatal infirmity which shadowed his boyhood clings to him still. Thanks to the influence of his young wife, who watches over him with ever-jealous care, he is not often overcome by temptation; yet the situations are reversed. The wife becomes the guardian of the husband.

Instead of looking up to him in trust and confidence, and finding that rest in his love which every woman craves, she trembles when he goes away alone, not knowing how he may return. He cannot take care of himself. What has she to hope for? Yet, cheerful, and bright, and loving, she watches over and keeps him from excess; and may be in time the demon may be laid, and the tireless watcher find her reward.

Sam has a wife and children to love and care for, yet he is totally regardless of his duty. John McAllister, in his worst days, was never guilty of such excesses as Sam Golden indulges in habitually. His home is dark, cheerless, hopeless, as his future—in its saddest sense, *the drunkard's home.* Annette by no

means verifies her mother's forebodings. She is happy and contented in her home, and is no longer the wife of a poor man, for Archie has proved that industry and good habits are a surer passport to wealth and honor than a *rich father.* Mr. and Mrs. Golden have a pleasant home in the village, where, but for the waywardness of their eldest son and the weakness of the younger, they might be happy. They never think of attributing their troubles to the false education they themselves gave their children, and never cease to wonder that Fanny's children all turn out so well, while their own, with so much better advantages, improve them so badly. They almost think the inspired penman made a mistake when he said, "Train up a

child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it," for certainly their boys were not going at all in the way they should go. To see ourselves as God sees us, even "to see ourselves as others see us," is a rare attainment, and would lead to wonderful changes if it could be brought about. We will glance hastily at Charley's happy home, a Christian home, where the bright, beautiful children are brought up in the love and fear of God, where the rule that obtains is, "To do good, and to communicate, forget not." Charity in giving, and that higher soul-charity, the *crowning* grace, is the ruling principle here. In Kate's home we find peace, contentment, and happiness. Mr. and Mrs. Merton join with all the other children in smooth-

ing the pathway of their honored parents, forgetful of the infirmity of the one, and deeply reverencing the nobility of the other. And Jemmy, too, with his pleasant-faced wife and prattling children, he is an honorable man, "thanks to mother and mother's God," he says.

"It would have been so easy for me to have gone the downward road, for I believe I *inherited* a love for the poison, and it met me everywhere. If she hadn't held on to me every minute, and *he* hadn't helped me, I must have fallen."

But the quicksands are parted, we trust, for now he has a well-grounded hope in Christ. Morning and evening, with his wife and children, he kneels in prayer for protection and guidance, and such are safe. We will tarry a few mo-

ments in Maggie's pleasant home before bidding our friends a final farewell. We should know her in a moment, for time has but brushed her with his wings, and the clear gray eyes sparkle as resolutely as ever, and the short crisp curls look as independent. She has the brisk, energetic step of old as she bustles in and out, for "mother is here to-day," and that is a pleasure she always highly appreciates. The pleasant brown cottage is their own, so she may improve and beautify it to her heart's content. The large green yard is full of the brightest flowers.

"Foolish little woman, to slave yourself so to your flowers," says the indulgent husband, wheeling dirt, and making flower-beds, and watching their growing beauties all the while, for *he* loved flowers

—the cherub boy who brightened their home four short years, and then went home among the angels to win their footsteps heavenward.

Mother is here, and the choicest flowers are cut to decorate the table and the mantelpieces; and the house is bright with bloom, and sweet with the fragrance of flowers and good-humor.

"You seem to be very happy, my dear," said the fond mother, looking around the pleasant room, out into the orchard, where the trees were laden with ripening fruit, and to the smooth meadows beyond. "You have all that you need, so that you never know want, good health, a kind husband, and, best of all, the love of God in your heart."

"Yes, mother, that is best of all, and

all the rest would be empty enough without it; but isn't it strange we never can feel entirely satisfied? I love my home, but that tavern across the way torments me almost beyond endurance. If I did not care for any one but myself, it would not appear so dreadful, may be; but I *remember*, and when I see young men, good, kind-hearted, noble young men some of them are, going in there, I feel as if I must *cry out* sometimes and tell them of their danger. They drink and gamble there, and it is one of the very breathing-holes of perdition. You cannot see the flames—only the poor scorched victims."

"It is very strange that in this peaceful country neighborhood such a house should be licensed, Maggie."

"Yes indeed, mother; but it is not so

peaceful as you imagine. That rumseller has left his mark in nearly every house in this neighborhood. A young man who lived here last winter drank at his bar till the liquor maddened him, and then attempted to go home. You see that high bank below the house? It drops off almost perpendicularly to the bed of the brook, and is nearly forty feet high. He rolled off that bank, and down to the bottom, tearing his clothes, and face, and hands on the bushes; and then he imagined he was on the river-bank, and if he stirred he would fall in, so he lay still and yelled till help came and got him up into the road again. Then he went home, and beat his wife and child, and turned them out of doors. He broke the dishes upon the table, and every-

thing that he could lay his hands upon, raving and cursing all the while like a demon."

"What became of the poor wife, Maggie?"

"She never went back, and I'm glad of it. She was only a young girl, and she took her child and went to her father's house. Then there is that fine-looking young blacksmith. He has delirium tremens, and tries to kill his patient wife sometimes in his drunken sprees. Only a few days ago the neighbors had to go in and take an axe away from him, or he would have killed them all."

"It don't seem possible that such dreadful things are going on under the protection of law in this peaceful-looking neighborhood."

"That is the worst of it, mother. Men are licensed by law to do this terrible sin. I don't know as I have an enemy but what I can forgive and love in some fashion but *these rumsellers.* I'm afraid I hate them as bad as ever; and if I love God ever so much, I hate them all the same."

"Can't you hate and abhor the crime, and pity the criminal, Maggie? Can't you 'hate the sin, and yet the sinner love'? Our Saviour does that."

"When they will stop selling rum, I might think of it; but when they are going on all the same, ruining souls for a little worthless money, don't ask me."

"On the old subject, Maggie?" queried George, who just then entered. "There's a sore spot in my little woman's heart

that don't get healed over, and she does get excited sometimes when she thinks of it. I wish you could forget, Maggie."

"Oh! I wish I could, George; but how can I when I see men destroying themselves every day?—somebody's fathers, somebody's brothers. If the time ever comes—and I believe it will—when the law shall cease to license this dreadful crime, I will thank God and be happy."

"Are you not happy now, foolish little woman? Must somebody else's misdoings destroy your happiness utterly?"

"No indeed, George; but you must let me speak out once in a while, or my heart would burst. All these cruel wrongs shall be righted one day."

"Yes, child, cling to that faith," said the mother; "and I suppose every one,

however humble, will bear some part in the work. God works with human hands. He inspires human hands to carry on his great work, and it takes a great many true words to produce convictions of great truths sometimes. It takes a great many stones to make a building, but one little one would be missed; so I hope every humble worker will take courage, and work on, remembering that 'truth is great, and must prevail.' The time will come when the people of this land shall enjoy the protection of a prohibitory law, and when there *shall be enough virtuous men to enforce it.*"

"You talk grandly, darling mother. God grant you may be a true prophet."

It is customary in winding up a story to bring all the parties into the blissful

estate of matrimony, and *there leave them;* but in tracing the *life-history* through which you have patiently followed us, kind reader, we must take you to a death-bed.

John McAllister had enjoyed his usual health, and, when the holy Sabbath came, he repaired to the church, as he sometimes did of late, and seemed to listen intently to the words of the man of God. What his thoughts were on that last Sabbath on which he should hear the Gospel invitations, no one could know. People noticed the attentive listener, and more than one earnest prayer arose from Christian hearts that the message of mercy might reach him. They could not see the death-angel even then with uplifted dart waiting for the summons to

strike; but early on Monday morning the news was handed from lip to lip that Mr. McAllister was stricken with paralysis, and lay upon the bed of death. The minister visited and prayed with him, but he gave no signs of recognition. His children wept over him; and the true, faithful wife, who had clung to him through all his degradation, said, weeping, "If we could only know that he is prepared to die, death would lose all its bitterness; but we will leave him in the hands of God." Ah! where else can the burdened soul go with its load of grief and sorrow? —where but unto him who has said, "Cast thy burden on the Lord, and he will sustain thee, and strengthen thee, and comfort thee." There was no shadow of remorse mingled with the sorrow the

wife of John McAllister felt as she laid the husband of her youth under the sod of the valley.

She had never murmured at the bitterness of her earthly lot; but her life-task was ended now.

"Now, mother, you must come home with us." "Now, mother, you must rest, and let us take care of you," the children all contended.

"This doesn't look much like being left in my old age to die alone because I have *outlived my usefulness*," said Mrs. McAllister, with glad, happy tears.

"A mother can *never* outlive her usefulness, *ours* especially," answered Nelly; "but I have not commenced mine; so, instead of availing myself of any of the kind offers of a home my brothers and

sisters have made, I will visit them now and then, while I try to do something for myself. I will not be an idler any longer, mother, in this busy world."

So the log-house is deserted, and the ruin looks cheerless and desolate enough, for the old walls cannot repeat the life-histories which have transpired within its walls. Mrs. McAllister divides her time among her children, among whom she is always a welcome and honored guest. The evening of her days is like a beautiful sunset, for around it the glowing radiance of a life spent in fellowship with God, and in doing good, mingles and glows in sacred beauty; and we know that surely at the last it shall *fade into the light of heaven!*

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